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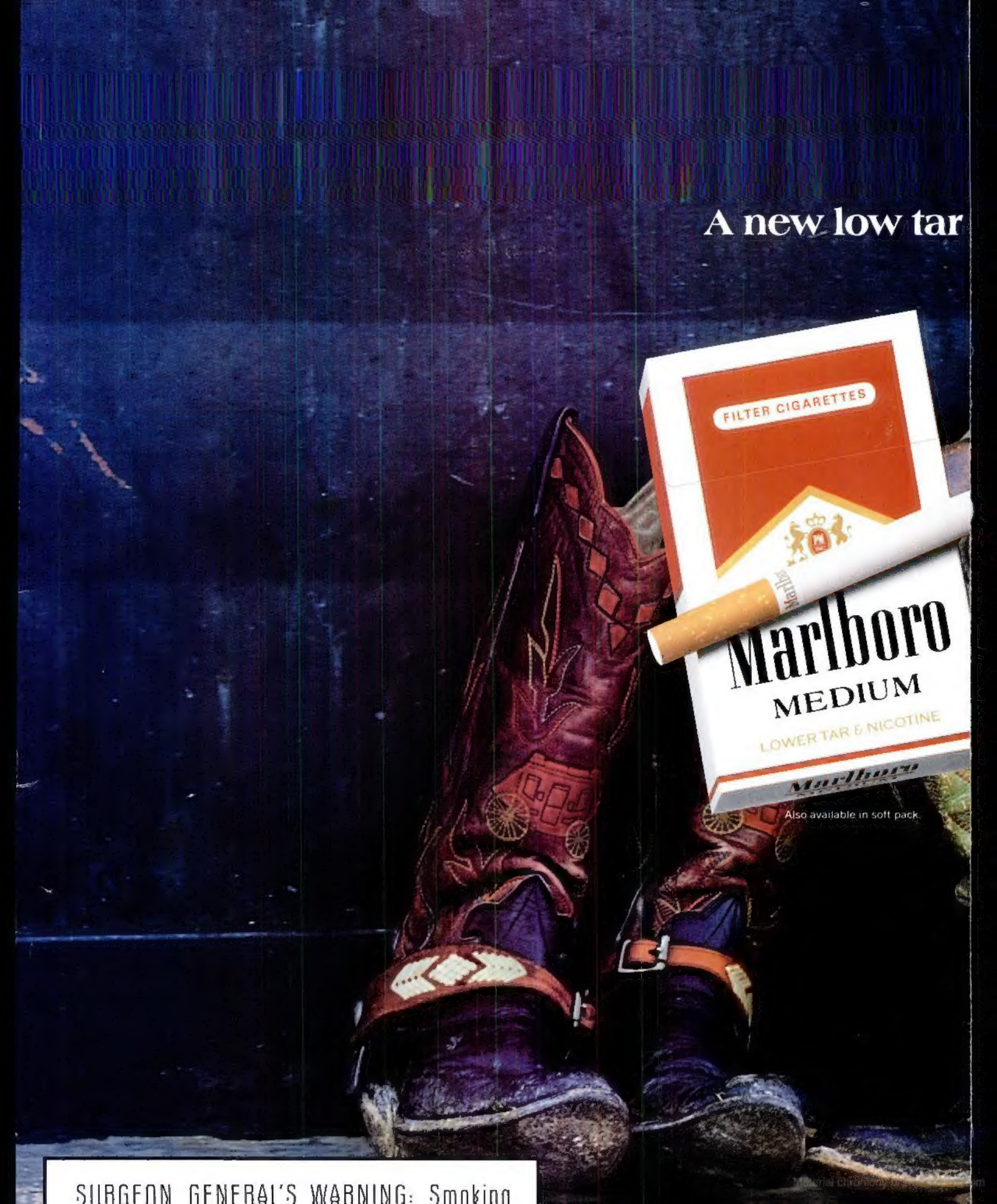
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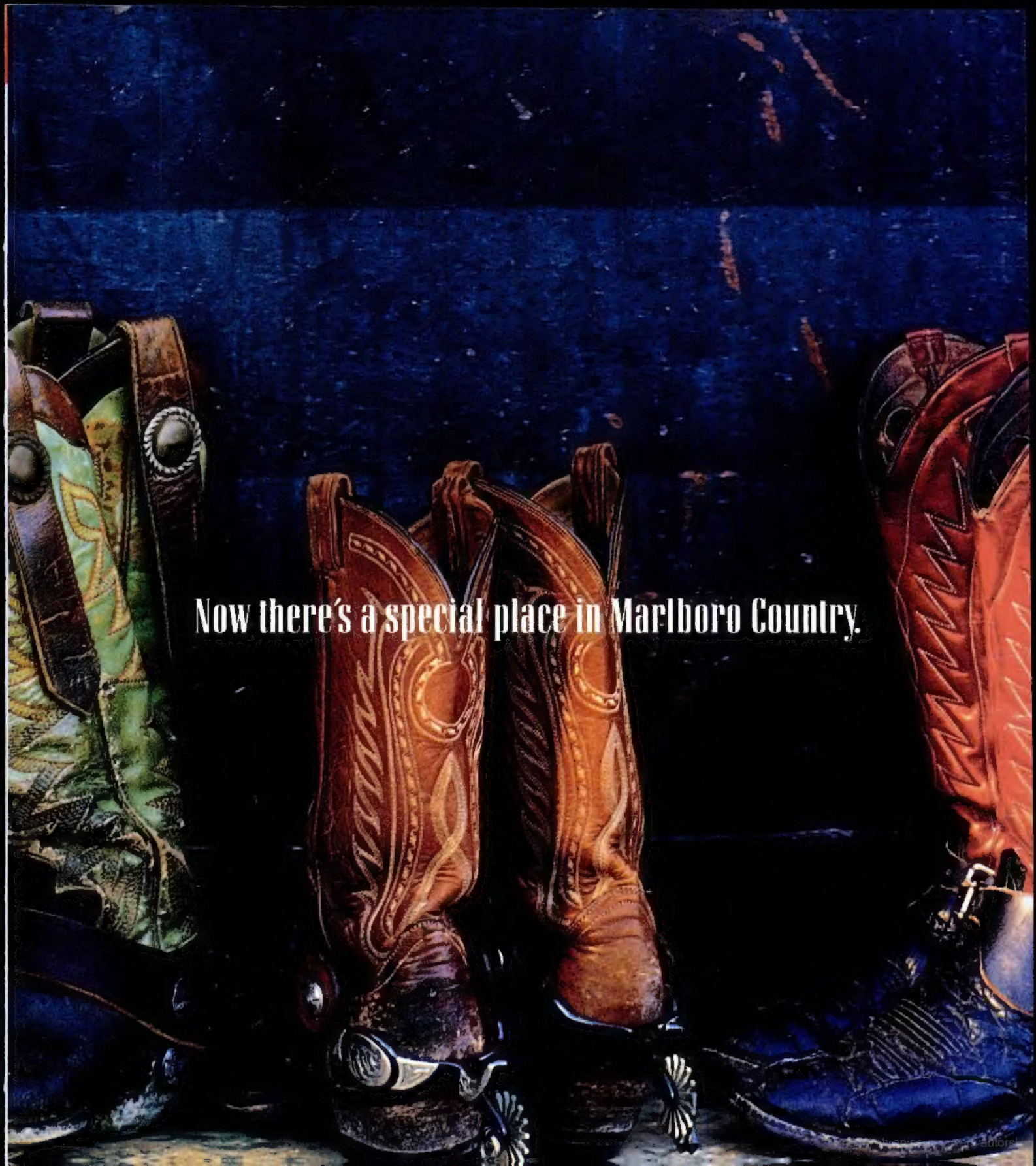
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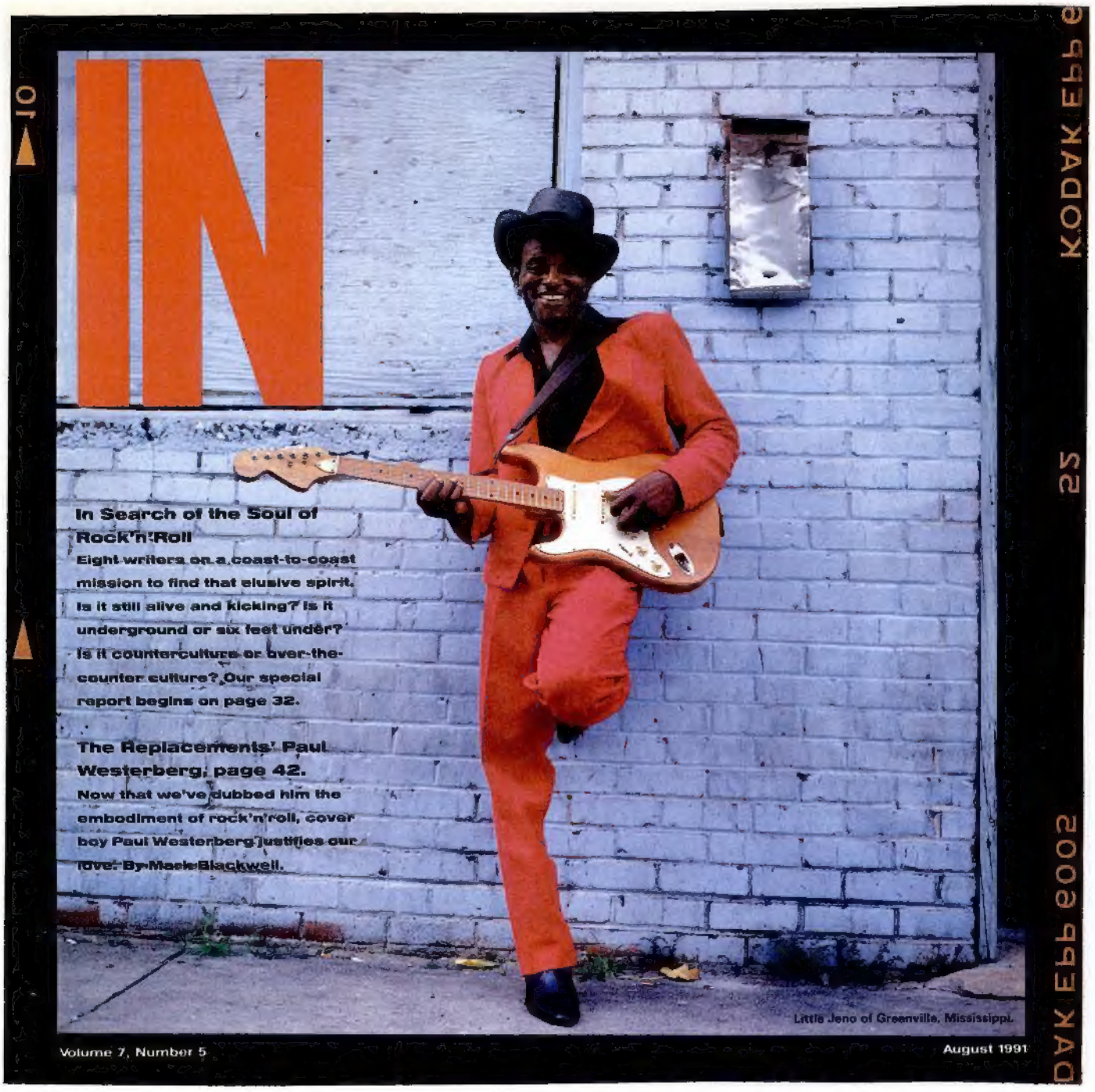
IN
In Search of the Soul of Rock'n'Roll
Eight writers on a coast-to-coast mission to find that elusive spirit. Is it still alive and kicking? Is it underground or six feet under? Is it counterculture or over-the-counter culture? Our special report begins on page 32.
The Replacements' Paul Westerberg, page 42.
Now that we've dubbed him the embodiment of rock'n'roll, cover boy Paul Westerberg justifies our love. By Mack Blackwell.
Little Jeno of Greenville, Mississippi.
Volume 7, Number 5
August 1991

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[1] Sunday World
[2] Record Mirror
[3] NME
[4] Rave
[5] Smash Hits
[6] Melody Maker

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TALE SPINNERS

Richard Hell, the inventor of punk rock and New York's premier postpunk poet, went soul-searching in Rapid City, South Dakota (*page 66*), where he was made to feel right at home. On his first day he overheard a passerby downtown explaining to a companion, "Let me tell you, man—they had me on murder, they had me on extortion." • **Bob Mack**, who has been following the Slick Rick case (*page 70*) since the rap star was first indicted for attempted murder, has written for *Spy*, *The Village Voice*, MTV, and even William F. Buckley's *National Review*. • Contributing Editor **Richard Gehr** was sent to Casper, Wyoming, this month to find the soul of rock'n'roll *(page 82)*. Although Gehr writes for *The Village Voice*, *American Film*, and *New York Newsday*, he secretly aspires to write for *Sassy*, "the only magazine that matters." (Note: Besides SPIN.) Gehr is the coauthor of an upcoming encyclopedia of world music. During the last year, he has been on assignment in Dublin, Dakar, Antigua, Moscow, and Martinique, but Casper, he says, is the only place he's experienced culture shock. • In her American debut, **Lyndsay Baker** writes about a new breed of artist-based dance music that goes back to soul with a human face (Singles, *page 94*). "In contrast to all the studio music coming out right now," Baker says, "this new U.K. music has more real feeling, focusing on personality." Lindsay writes about music and fashion for *The Guardian*, *Arena*, and *The Face*. • "It was a gas to photograph Paul Westerberg in Memphis, really the heart of American musical culture. Paul's bold musical style belies his shyness about photo shoots and publicity," says cover photographer **Jesse Frohman**, who also took the photographs for this issue's reports from New Orleans and Greenville, Mississippi. Frohman's work has also appeared in *Details*, *The Face*, and French *Vogue*.

Lyndsay Baker

Bob Mack

Jesse Frohman

Richard Gehr

Richard Hell

Employee of the Month is Accounts Manager Dawn Labriola. Dawn is actually our employee of the month twice a month, which is how often she hands out paychecks.

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at night, sells his soul to rock and roll?

TOP SPIN

New Orleans is just one of of the places we pulled into during our search for the soul of rock'n'roll, a journey that took us to cities and towns across America. We get started on page 32.

The search for the soul of rock'n'roll is sort of like the quest for the Holy Grail—and about as implausible.

The idea to initiate the search, and therefore this issue, came to me while watching the Grammys on TV, when suddenly the whole emptiness and suffocating glitz of the broadcast overwhelmed me. I thought to myself: There's no rock'n'roll here. I flicked the channels. Like holiday slides changing in a projector, different TV stations illuminated the room. But the soul of rock'n'roll was nowhere to be found, not in the faux-rock–based soft drink and beer commercials, nor in the flickering and twitching videos on MTV and VH-1. It wasn't on CNN although, or because, they were updating the Grammys, and it wasn't in the bloodless cable TV commercials hawking Time-Life multirecord sets. I thought, if the great radar dish of American culture—TV—can't locate rock's soul, where has it gone?

Somewhere along the line, rock's pilot light went out. It's too simplistic to say that video killed the radio star, but an element of that is true. Video and MTV, the great god to which all videos are offered up like pagan sacrifices, obviously changed music, irrevocably and not necessarily for the better. There's no point bemoaning that. The milk is spilt. So that may have transformed the music culture, but could not have extinguished its inextinguishable soul. The pilot light can always be re-lit.

In many ways, MTV is our real-life Big Brother, albeit benign: an indefatigable, 24-hour monitor in virtually every home telling us how to act, dress, and sometimes even talk. Rock'n'roll always set style but no one before now had ever set rock'n'roll. Its energy was its whirling confusion and spontaneity. Things started to go bad not when it became big business—it was that long before it was containable—but when big business learned how to control it. Rock was born to be wild—tamed it is meaningless.

Which is not to say that the only worthwhile rock culture is one that sucks at the breast of anarchy. That's equally untrue. For music to be a useful force, it must have the ability to galvanize, not merely inspire to destroy. Nor is image the devil, rock'n'roll without image is like a stereo system without speakers. It's just that when all you have is image, and that's specifically manicured to the market's researched appetite, then the end result is a soulless sham.

Rock wrote its epitaph—the way it wants to be remembered—in the mid-'60s, at the peak of its adolescent vigor, when Mick Jagger, in response to the Rolling Stones being arrested for urinating against a gas station wall, said: "We piss anywhere, man." That was the essence of rock'n'roll—not vulgarity, but defiance, victimless outlawishness. Rock represented us against them. Rock was our Robin Hood: the romance of idealism and the people's champion in search of justice.

It's incorrect to merely equate rock's vitality with political activism. Rock'n'roll didn't end the war in Vietnam, but it was the incessant tribal drumbeat that kept the war wagers from sleeping comfortably. And that had an effect. Rock hasn't torn down the establishment, nor was it meant to, but it has kept us vigilant to it. That is its power and greatest value. Rock was the soundtrack of the changes wrought over a generation. Now all too often it has become the soundtrack of preserving the status quo, whether it's Coca-Cola's market share, or a car company's.

I don't accept it was inevitable that the spirit of rock'n'roll would be assimilated into the establishment, the way powerful corporations eventually suppress competition by buying it. Nor do I completely believe in the notion of rock's purity: Rock is not meant to be pure, it's meant to integrate with everything. It's meant to get dirty and involved. *Pure* rock we have, and that's the problem: You won't find purer rock than on a beer commercial. And homage to alternativeness is often nothing more than an excuse for averageness. Good art doesn't lose anything by being commercial—just the opposite, it gains velocity and reach. The enemy of art is not success—Heaven forbid, that's too rarely the reward as it is. It's the seduction away from principles that's the enemy. And it takes strength to resist it.

That's what I think is lacking from today's rock'n'roll: the courage to stop reading the trades, follow MTV rotations, and negotiate for TV commercials long enough to make music that articulates the alternatives to the sterility of our present culture. It's going to take courage to answer the call of the soul of rock'n'roll. It always does.

Rock'n'roll is more than American, it's America. It's the same sense of possibility and simultaneous impossibility. A great chord struck imperiously and fading, sweetly to silence, across the vast plain. America is too big, the note can't carry. But the glory of rock is the striking of that note.

American rock'n'roll is in some ways always a search for America, a mythical odyssey preordained to fail. There's an eternally youthful element to it, like trying to go back to Never-Never Land. It's Jim Morrisson looking for his Shaman. It's as if rock, and we, wish to climb back into the womb of our own mythology.

The soul of rock'n'roll didn't die or disappear, but it has clearly taken on a different form. Like someone you once knew and now go looking for, rock's soul has moved. This issue is the search to find where it moved to.

We sent our editors and writers to different locations across the country, not telling them where they were going until we were gathered at the airport and I handed them their tickets. (I thought it was a good idea; opinion differed on their part.) When they arrived they would have no contacts, no leads, and, basically, no preconceptions of what they were going to do or find.

Did they find it? Like Knights of the Round Table searching for the Grail, they grappled with its questions. And in doing so, each of them came face to face, in their own way, with the soul of rock'n'roll.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

JESSE FRICHMAN

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POINT BLANK LETTERS

EDITED BY

NATHANIEL WICE

Ill Will

As an illustrator who works mostly for editorial clients, I have to read and look at almost every magazine published. The vast wasteland of verbal ephemera I'm usually confronted with is excruciating. The lack of wit, substance, and verbal sensuality in most magazines and newspapers is depressing. What a relief when my boyfriend gave me your article on George Will [Topspin, June '91].

I'm so happy to read a dialectical explanation of a historical period I lived through that combines every quality in good writing I've hungered for. You manage to balance the intuitive insights with excellent socioanthropological analysis. I hope you consider writing a book. Your sensual use of language is a great pleasure to read and I look forward to more. Needless to say, I'll now read every issue of SPIN.

Diana Bryan
New York, New York

George Will really is too much. He writes about youth culture with removed disgust. He has no hope for this generation or any born after the '60s. It seems as though he has some personal vendetta against youth culture. Did he get dumped badly by a Deadhead? Or did he get slipped some acid at one of those wild Washington parties?

Your masterpiece of a response was right on target. This trash which prompted your rebuttal was very much deserving of the literary dressing-down you gave it.

And to think they call us "angry young men."

David Blumenthal
Nutley, New Jersey

I read with great interest your response, in a sense, to George Will's column. I had read the Will piece also, while on my way to yet another debate about, one could say, youth culture.

The thing that cries out for your discussion is not just who on the Uptight Right is saying what about scum like Luther Campbell and dead people like Jim Morrison. The problem with the youth counterculture is that it has no agenda other than mocking what is and has been.

Youth culture's agenda today is rejection of the accumulated wisdom of the past—wholesale. Seems like nihilism to me

That is sad, because there just happens to be much to be learned from the past.

The one thing I would like to see youth culture acknowledge is that there may be a value beyond youth that should be exalted: wisdom. Any society that rejects and doesn't even *know* what Augustine or Aristotle or Christ or Chambers or Chesterton or Marx actually said has no right to consider itself having any culture. I like what Gandhi, in what was a *prophetic* pronouncement, said when asked what he thought about Western culture: "An interesting concept."

I think many of your readers think that opposition to and rejection of every time-honored value is some sort of badge of cultural heroism. But as you know, protesting everything simply winds up being exalting nothing

I am looking forward to a Topspin on the need of the youth culture to educate itself about the past so as not to repeat it. The youth culturists today that I encounter on the campuses are basically worshipers of the ancient god, Baal. How about an article on Baal in SPIN?

John B. [Jack] Thompson
Coral Gables, Florida

PHOTO BY NEIL ZLOZOWER

We regret having cropped Black Crowes bass player Johnny Colt out of a photo of the band accompanying our May '91 feature. Nothing personal.

"I went to see the doctor today. He poked a little. Probed a little. And lectured a lot. Everything was okay until he came to my ears. Turned out they needed cleaning. When the nurse finished, it was pretty amazing. I could hear every squeak from

her rubber soles. And every scratch of the pen as I wrote them out a check I knew I couldn't possibly cover. On the way home I flipped on my car stereo and cranked it up. Unbelievable. It was like I was hearing it for the very first time. Those speakers

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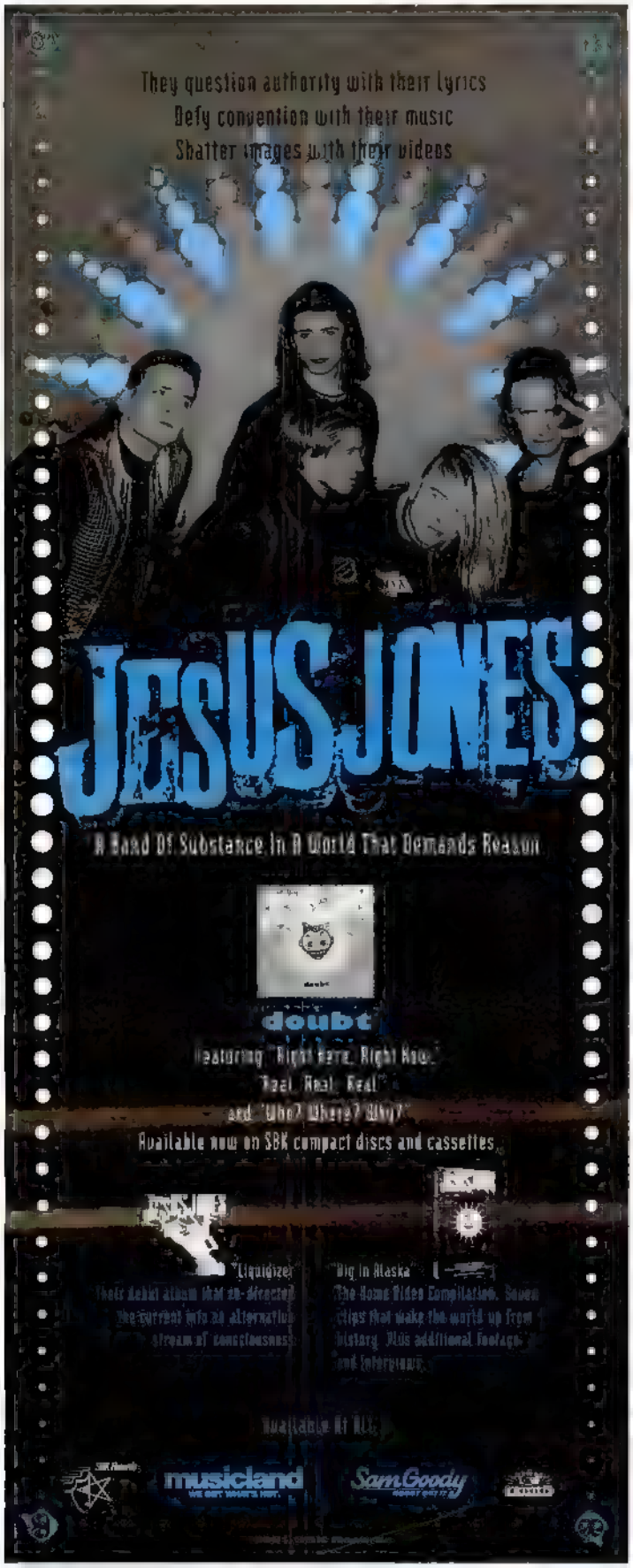
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Irwin Chusid
WFMU/Upsala College
East Orange, New Jersey

Telling It Like It Is

Please tell me why SPIN is one of this country's only periodicals to have the balls to print articles like Michael Levine's piece on the apocryphal drug war (Antihero, June '91). And what a marketing strategy by Burroughs-Wellcome—trying to get the public to buy into a documented toxic substance like AZT (AIDS, June '91).
Sean D. Hurley
Bellevue, Washington

Stone Cold Busted

I'm a little confused. Little guys like me shouldn't buy General Electric light bulbs because G E. builds nuclear weapons ("Cool Consumerism" by Michael Stipe, May '91). But it's okay for big guys like R E M. to promote their record on *Saturday Night Live*, whose profits ultimately go to NBC's owner, G E

You can make a difference, too, Michael. Walk it like you talk it.
C. LeSueur
Evanston, Illinois

Question: How many R.E.M. compact discs promoted nuclear bombs? *Answer*: Every one of 'em.

G E. has a plastics division that makes Lexan, a supertough, superpure plastic (yes, it's recyclable) that's used in the manufacture of compact discs. Will Stipe be leading a boycott of CDs when he gets this news?
Rick J. Wright
Evansville, Indiana

Absolute Zero

Although your article on the '70s (Cool Decade, May '91) was commendable, it was way too short. So I decided to compile my own list of things I remember from the '70s. Here goes:

Musicians: New York Dolls, Hanoi Rocks, T. Rex, the Bay City Rollers, David Essex, Shaun Cassidy, K.C. and the Sunshine Band, Bobby Sherman, Maria Muldaur, Leif Garrett, Carole King. TV shows: *Speed Racer, The Groovie Ghoulies, Sigmund and the Sea Monsters*, the *Jackson Five* cartoon, *Land of the Lost, The Banana Splits Adventure Hour , Clutch Cargo, Gigglesnort Hotel, The New Zoo Revue, The Smothers Brothers, The Donny and Marie Show*, Underall Pantyhose commercials (the butt that goes *dink, dink*), *Starsky and Hutch*. Dances: the Bump, the Bus Stop, the Hustle. Clothes: parachute pants, multicolor floppy hats. Toys and collectibles: *Charlie's Angels* and *Starsky and Hutch* trading cards, Romper Stompers, *16* magazine, roller skates. Other stuff: Billy Beer, happy feet, disco demolition (Comiskey Park, Chicago); Pintos and Gremlins were the newest in compact cars
Diana Salisbury
Park Ridge, Illinois

Congratulations on devoting an entire issue to cool (May '91) without featuring a single woman. However unintentional the oversight, it ruined what would otherwise have been one of the finest issues.

Since you obviously need a few suggestions, I've provided my own list:
Cool Actress: Jodie Foster
Cool Director: Lizzie Borden
Cool Rappers: Queen Latifah, Salt-n-Pepa
Cool Soul Sisters: Aretha Franklin, Neneh Cherry, Tina Turner
Cool Arts Activists: Guerrilla Girls
Cool Crime Fighter: Lisa Sliwa
Fortysomething Cool: Susan Sarandon
Posthumous Cool: Sarah Vaughan
Cool Rockers: Patti Smith, Joan Jett, Kim Gordon
Cool Dead Poet: Sylvia Plath
Cool Male Rocker With a Woman's Name: Alice Cooper

Sinead O'Connor used to be cool, but she lost it along the way. Celia Farber is always cool. And just for the record, Michael Stipe is too self righteous to be cool.
Jennifer Oullette
New York, New York

Your Cool issue was
Robyn L. Baylor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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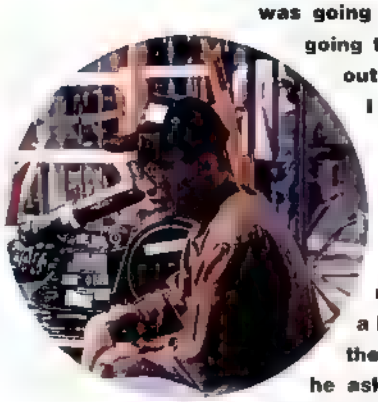
Director John Singleton shows the true colors of South Central Los Angeles with his first film, *Boyz N the Hood*.

John Singleton's like a kid in a candy store. The neophyte auteur is stalking a Los Angeles mall with a sense of purpose. "I got to have that," he mutters at frequent intervals, filling his shopping cart with copies of *Jaws*, *Annie Hall*, the *Terminator X in the Valley of the Jeep Beets* album, and 3rd Bass's single "Pop Goes the Weasel." His retail rampage is abruptly halted at the video-games department when the saleswoman informs him that a new shipment isn't expected until the following week. "I've got all those," he says, glancing disappointedly at the hundreds of titles on display. This isn't so much an exhibition of conspicuous consumerism as a determined effort to make up for lost time. A little over a year ago he was holed up in a dorm room deprived of most outside cultural stimuli. Twelve months later he finds himself the only USC college student to graduate from the film school with an agent at Creative Artists Agency, a three-movie deal at Columbia, and a first feature in the bag.

Boyz N the Hood, Singleton's message-heavy debut, kicks off like a South Central *Stand By Me* then proceeds to ditch all preconceptions in a movie which features one of the strongest father-son relationships seen onscreen for years, a startling performance by Ice Cube ("See AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted laugh! And cry!"), plus the visual and narrative skills necessary to back up Singleton's assertion that "nobody's ever handled a story about the streets in a poetic way like this."

While the rapid ascendancy that made Singleton the toast of Cannes has been attributed to Hollywood's sudden hunger for the young black director du jour, the director points to his own personal determination. "I went into film school with a certain focus. I was going to make films about my people in a way that was never done before. I was going to be like a filmic soldier. I was going to learn the importance of subtext, of character, and of plot. I was going to learn everything I needed to know to be a bad muthafucka coming out of film school. I just internalized it. I said over and over, This is what I want. And it happened that way."



Singleton describes himself as a writer who directs to protect his vision. Militant in his insistence on directing *Boyz N the Hood*, he went on record as saying there was no way he was about to let some hick from Kansas screw up a movie about his neighborhood. "That's already happened," he growls. "It was called *Colors*." Does that mean no white director could tackle a black subject? "If they were raised in a black neighborhood, if they had black parents, but if they're not from the environment, how they going to make a film about the environment?" he asks. So would he ever tackle a white subject? "I think black people in America know more about white people than white people know about black people," he explains. "I could do it if I wanted."

Back at the video store he pauses and picks up Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*. "You know, I'd really like to do a black version of this. America isn't ready for it yet. But one day . . . "

JONATHAN BERNSTEIN

NICK VACCARO

John Singleton's in the house with *Boyz N the Hood*

Peter Himmelman *From Strength to Strength* (Epic) Nice, earnest, folky stuff from a nice, earnest, folky guy Himmelman steers clear of treacly sentiment and instead focuses on keeping things simple, both musically and lyrically Direct, honest, and at points quite beautiful, this is quiet music that will hold your attention. (Greer)

The Golden Palominos *Thundering Herd: The Best of the Golden Palominos* (Oceana). One of the strangest rock beasts of the '80s—not quite a band, but more than drummer Anton Fier's solo project. You'll want this 27-track compilation just for the guest luminaries like Stipe, Lydon, and Straw, but it's deeper than that. An interesting overview of a combo from which we have hopefully not yet heard the last. (Greer)

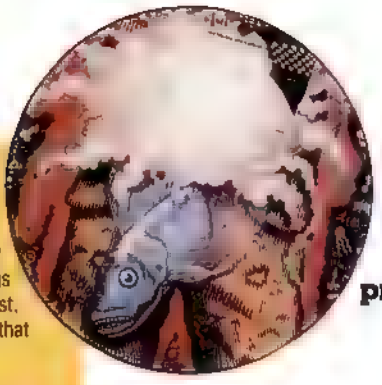
La Muerte *Kustom Kar Kompetition* (Caroline). Thrashing, crashing, and generally raising hell, these Belgian guys churn out some sick but extremely catchy noise Totally relentless, almost every song makes you want to get behind the wheel of *something*, shut off your brain, and run a few red lights. Go ahead and crank it up . . . you'll feel much better. (Spencer)

HEAVY ROTATION
STAFF SELECTIONS

Sounds of Blackness *The Evolution of Gospel* (Perspective). That was me in the corner, losing my religion—until I heard this record. *Rhythm Nation* knobmen Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis escape from Planet Janet to invent futuristic gospel for a 40-piece (count 'em) inspirational posse. With *massive* uplift, S O B keeps the faith while cleansing your palate of all those New Jack hacks. (Daly)

Rein Sanction *Broc's Cabin* (Sub Pop). What the . . . ? A Seattle rock band that relies on droning rhythmic guitar and engaging J Mascis-like vocals rather than noise and more noise? No It's on Seattle's Sub Pop, but Rein Sanction comes from Florida, and the album's producer, Shimmy Disc's Kramer, is from New York. Refreshing and potent, you won't believe it came from the Sun Belt either (Fidler)

Toni Childs *House of Hope* (A&M). Childs's pure, gravelly, and penetrating voice is all that counts here Toni tells stories that will sometimes break your heart, but with such insouciance that it compensates for any despondency evoked. Self-made and self-taught, Childs is a goddess who possesses much charisma and vocal cords of steel. (Bonner)



GROOVY ART

Vinyl becomes a canvas as four visual artists produce picture-discs.

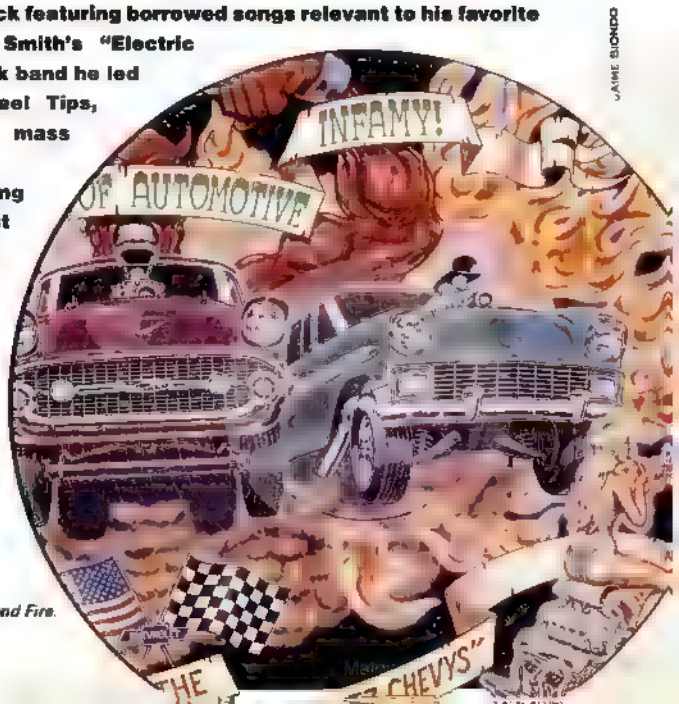
At Blast First Records, vinyl is not only alive and well, but it's also glowing in vivid color. The alternative record company recently offered visual artists Robt. Williams, Gary Panter, Raymond Pettibon, and Joe Coleman the graphic and musical work space of picture-disc LPs with gatefold sleeves and insert booklets.

The most coherent of the resulting projects is Robt. Williams's double album, *Chrome, Smoke, and Fire: A Compilation of Hot Rod Music*. Williams is best known for his frightening beastie cover art for Guns N' Roses' *Appetite for Destruction* (suppressed after the initial pressing). His artwork here, however, is a wonderful American dreamworld of drag-racing buggies cruising and crashing on desert highways. For the music Williams compiled hot-rod songs from the '50s and '60s, a genre similar to surf music: corny, stupid, and fun.

Gary Panter, creator of the wonderful Jimbo for *Raw Comix*, reveals himself on *One Hell Soundwich* to be a dabbler in arty Texan psychedelic punk from way back. Half of the songs are his own and half are his musician pal Jay "Condom" Cotton's, and the artwork is a crude jumble of stuff in various media, including crying fish, a sly octopus, and some odd little rubberish dolls. Raymond Pettibon, now most famous for his cover of Sonic Youth's *Goo*, defined the 1980s aesthetic centered around SST Records bands like Black Flag and the Minutemen. On *Torches and Standards*, his characteristic violent pop imagery is replaced by meditative circular abstract images which complement a hit-or-miss jam session featuring himself on vocals. Finally there's Joe Coleman, infamous for his performance art in which he blows himself up (sort of) and bites the heads off mice. *Infernal Machine* is a compendium of this disturbed man's nasty obsessions, with truly repulsive artwork and a soundtrack featuring borrowed songs relevant to his favorite themes (e.g., Bessie Smith's "Electric Chair"), music by a punk band he led in the '70s called Steel Tips, and interviews with mass murderers.

These records, among the oddest and most original objects to drift down the pop culture turnpike this year, are adaptable to all tastes. And if you don't own a record player, just stick thumbtacks through the little holes in the center and hang them on the wall.

IAN KREIDMAN



Top, Joe Coleman's disc, *Infernal Machine*; *right*, Robt. Williams's *Chrome, Smoke, and Fire*.

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DEAR ELVIS,

Hey man, why'd you grow that stupid-looking red beard?

Rolf Kaxter
Butte, Montana

Son, I do believe you've got a hold of the wrong Elvis. This here's a Dear Elvis *Presley* column. When you talk about that big red beard you're talking about that little ol' English boy over there named Elvis, uh, *Costello*, I believe his name is. But in a way you wrote to the right man, because I do know a hell of a lot about unnecessary facial hair. I myself grew some damn good sideburns in my day, and I was proud as a Sunday-go-to-meetin' peacock then, but I wouldn't be caught dead with something like that all over the side of my face now. One lesson you got to learn in life, son, is everything comes and goes in phases. Sometimes a man'll shave and sometimes he won't. That's just the way it is.

Accidents will happen, Elvis

40-ounce malt liquor is a joke

The 40-ounce bottle of malt liquor is to most rappers what Coke is to Freedom Williams. But Public Enemy's Chuck D isn't like a lot of other rappers. Indeed, the ever-controversial Chuck is once again bucking the tide with PE's forthcoming single, an anti–malt-liquor song called "One Million Bottle Bags."

"Behind every empty bottle is an argument, or a murder, or some shit," Chuck has said, extending rap's anti-drug rhetoric to include alcohol. And recently he weighed in with a litany of other complaints about the so-called "40," arguing that malt liquor manufacturers specifically target the black community.

Public Enemy goes on record speaking out against malt liquor.

St. Ides, a maker of malt liquors, maintains that their product is just beer with higher alcohol content. They also contend that it's not just aimed at black consumers. Ironically, St. Ides is endorsed by Chuck's rapper pal Ice Cube, but Chuck's feelings seemingly haven't jeopardized their friendship. As Chuck put it, "Ice Cube's going to do what he's going to do, and I'm going to do what I'm going to do. My whole thing isn't toward the brothers. It's toward the companies. And I'm going after the companies' throats."

Forty pro, 40 con: Chuck D, *far left*, and Ice Cube.

ROB MACK

Top to bottom, Ed Crawford, Mike Watt, and George Hurley.

WATT'S HIS NAME

Talking to Firehose singer-bassist Mike Watt is at once inspiring and ingratiating. He speaks from his heart, but his heart beats idiosyncratically. He jumps rhythms without warning, just as his music does. His sincerity tells you that this is a guy who's never done anything the easy way.

"I was raised in Navy housing by the government," says Watt. "Punk rock was a way to get out and pursue the pioneer thing—to make your own road, build your own house, be intense, and get together with other dudes with intense ideas."

Watt has thrived on such intensity during his career—first with the Minutemen, cut short by the death of guitarist D. Boon, and for the past five years with Firehose. And even though Firehose's fourth album, *Flyin' the Flannel*, is Watt's major-label debut, he's quick to stress that his tough approach won't change: "I don't need anybody to tell me how to make music, so these people promised me they won't. If this doesn't sell, though, I get fired. I've never had to face that before."

But it's not really the industry people for whom the band toils. "It's for all the dudes like me who couldn't fit in, and used punk to fit in with each other," Watt says. "That's who we're working for."

ROB O'CONNOR

ILLUSTRATION BY ANASTASIA VASILAKIS

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dancehall days

This summer, hip hop's jeep supremacy is being threatened by dancehall reggae. Leading the onslaught is Jamaican superstar satyr Shabba Ranks.

Dancehall, a DJ-based reggae style danced from the waist down, is backed by rolling bass lines, military drumbeats, and glancing keyboard highlights on the upbeat. For Jamaicans under the age of 30, it is rock, television, movies, and soap opera rolled into one. Gossip about the lives of dancehall stars is an all-consuming national passion. Over the past decade, no dancehall star has approached the popularity of Shabba Ranks, who, after making his name as king of the incredibly obscene style known as slackness, conquered both the tender lover's rock and the politically correct culture with inventive lyrics and a voice like poured honey—dope smoker's frog lodged firmly in his throat.

For Jamaicans, Shabba Ranks is Ice Cube, Bobby Brown, and Luther Vandross all rolled into one, a fact not missed by Epic Records, with whom he's just inked a substantial deal. Having just completed the video for "Trailor Load a Girls" Shabba is busy enjoying the pleasures of New York, his favorite city in the world. "I love it. It's electrifying," he says. "Everything is busy, busy, busy. Everyone is free to live as they wish, and it is pleasing to see a jeep pumping all the slamming music." Shabba has also been enjoying his fair share of basketball on television. "I love basketball very much," he adds. "It is a pity I can't play. I love Patrick Ewing, Michael Jordan, Isiah Thomas, Larry Bird, and Gerald Wilkins. Every time the game of basketball is played, Shabba Ranks is in the house."

Shabba has an all-inclusive sense of cool, common in Jamaica but surprising in New York. "You have so many sweet singers. I love listening to the sweet soul sounds of Anita Baker, Luther Vandross, Michael Bolton." But one American star shines brighter than any other: "I love everything about Bobby Brown—if I could just take him home with me to show him what it's like to be around Jamaica . . ."

American movies are another Jamaican cultural import, and we talk about the Jamaican practice of naming oneself after tough-guy American movie stars. "Clint Eastwood never got beat up in his movies, always killed the other man," Shabba explains. "So they say, 'I want to be like Clint Eastwood,' then go around acting like him. Now in Jamaica they love Schwarzenegger and Bruce Willis. The moment a picture leaves the screen in Jamaica, you find about twenty people in the audience named after that star. When *New Jack City* hits Jamaica you will have thousands of guys named Ice T, no question about it, man."

About his own adolescence on the streets of Kingston, Shabba will say little, but some measure of the distance he has traveled can be gauged from this description of his early childhood in rural Cockpit Country: "One has to be carrying water on your head for many miles, you don't dare be taking transportation on the roads. Instead you have to walk two miles, walk three miles, wake up at beginning of the morning, feed the donkey grass, feed the chickens, make sure all the animals are being taken care of, see that the garden was weeded out properly. It was a hard time, man, and I try never to think back on it." For a moment he falls silent, lost in contemplation of one of many diamond rings.

While Shabba rose to prominence in Jamaica against incredible odds, the road to American stardom has been paved for him already. Both dancehall and rap evolved from the same style—toasting, the Jamaican practice of rapping over records pioneered in New York in the late '70s by the Jamaican DJ Kool Herc. Dancehall entered rap mainstream with *By All Means Necessary*, the groundbreaking album by KRS-One and Boogie Down Productions

Americanized dancehall cuts have become almost obligatory among rappers in recent months, and it is not hard to imagine dancehall dethroning rap as this summer's urban jeep music of choice. Dancehall has better bass, wilder vocal styles, plus a higher premium on entertainment, using gangster stereotypes in a playful and confident way missing in much hardcore rap. Perhaps the only people upset by this development are dancehall fans, many of whom left rap for a more private club of cognoscenti. Part of the pleasure of this community was the shared struggle of finding the limited release put out by labels like RAS, Greensleeves, Heartbeat, V P Records, and Profile Records. If all goes well with Shabba Ranks's American debut, those days will be gone for good.

DAVID SAMUELS

Shabba Ranks contemplates the rise of dancehall in America.

JESSE FROHMAN

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a catchy tune

Crystal Waters finds a home on the charts.

It's like a dream," says Crystal Waters, writer and performer of "Gypsy Woman (She's Homeless)," this summer's main contender for the Song You Hear Everywhere. With its nursery-rhymish hook ("La da dee, la da da. . . . ") and accessible cultural concern, this hypnotically danceable track has insinuated itself into the pop consciousness with an almost dreamy forcefulness, showing up on every radio format, coming out of every jeep, and always seeping out of the earphones of the Walkman next to you. The chummy chorus is even plastered across the windows of Manhattan's posh Emporio Armani showroom.

"It's not a social commentary song," Waters emphasizes. "It was written as a story from personal experience." That experience being Waters's observation of a neatly attired homeless woman who sang outside her sister's office building. The song, from Waters's new album, *Surprise*, transcends the usual "socially relevant hit" with a lack of a holier-than-thou moralism—as well as a massive beat you can dance to.

All this is fine by Waters. "I never thought the record would go beyond clubs," she says with a laugh. Her unpretentious, recklessly casual vocal style, and almost-shy stage presence displayed at New York's recent Love Ball at Roseland hint at a future filled with songs as quirkily ambitious as "Gypsy Woman."

SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT

LIVING ON A PRAYER

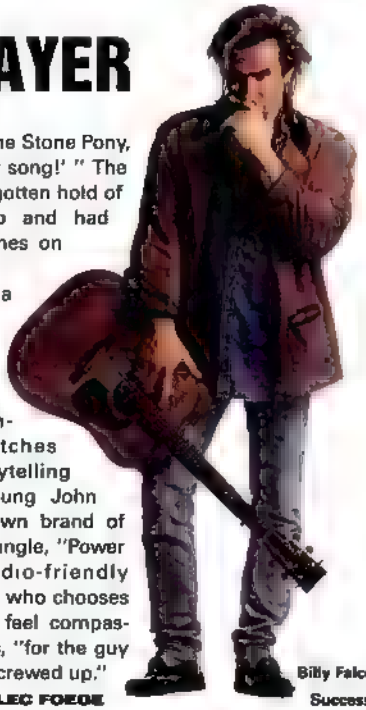
I'd never be fun playing at parties 'cause I don't know anything," says Long Island-bred singer-songwriter Billy Falcon with a wicked grin. "When I was a kid everyone was learning guitar the right way, but I learned two chords and figured it was time to write." Fortunately Falcon learned more than he thought. During a decade of professional and personal grief that preceded the release of his new album, *Pretty Blue World*, the self-taught tunesmith wrote just to keep sane. "I *love* writing," he confesses. "When I don't, I'm miserable."

A mid-'80s bout with religious zealotry (he joined a cult but later left it), followed by the long illness and death of his wife left Falcon with little besides his young daughter and his music. Semifrequent trips to Nashville were all that fueled him. "My baby was my reason to keep going," he says in retrospect. "No manager, no anything. Not a prayer." Then fortune smiled.

"My old bass player calls me and says, 'I saw Jon Bon Jovi at the Stone Pony, and he sang me your song!' " The Jersey demigod had gotten hold of Falcon's latest demo and had memorized all six tunes on the tape.

Bon Jovi was such a fan he decided to co-produce Falcon's new album with L.A. studio wizard Danny Kortchmar. The finished product matches straightforward storytelling reminiscent of a young John Hiatt with Falcon's own brand of wintry lyricism. The single, "Power Windows," is a radio-friendly scorcher about a man who chooses money over love. "I feel compassion," Falcon explains, "for the guy whose priorities got screwed up."

ALEC FOEGE



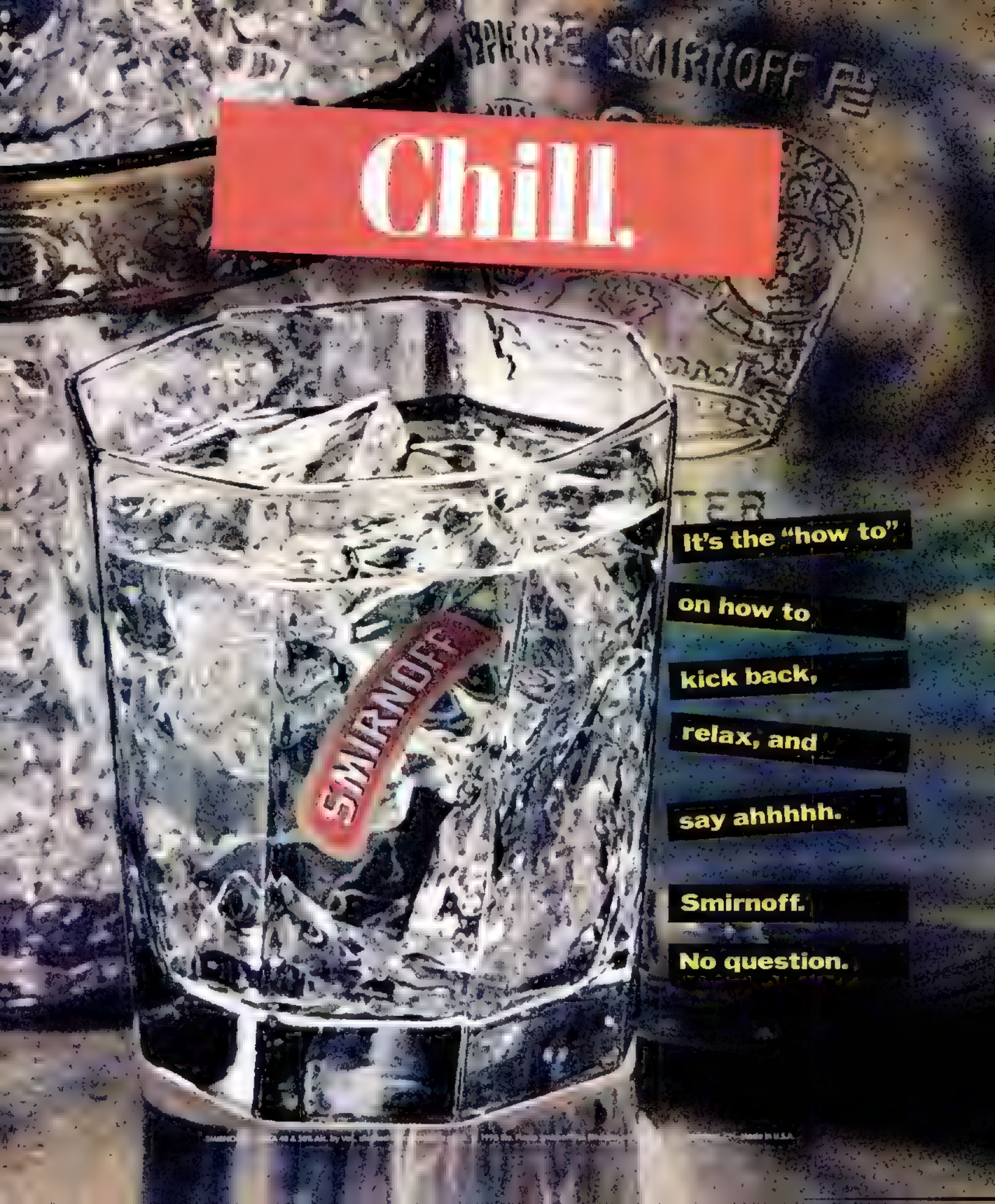
Billy Falcon. Success at last.

GREG WATERMAN TOP ALEXI TAN

WE'RE ALL CONNECTED

(Dialing 215-222-4209. Ring, ring, ring.) ***SPIN:*** Hello, Ms. Renée King? ***Voice on telephone:*** Yes. ***SPIN:*** Hi, I'm calling from SPIN. Do you know that an answering machine message with your voice, name, and phone number is sampled on De La Soul's "Ring Ring Ring (Ha Ha Hey)"? ***Renée King:*** Yes, I know. ***SPIN:*** You must be getting calls from all over. ***King:*** Lots of calls! I get calls from Yugoslavia; Greece; Amsterdam; Long Beach, California. . . . People want to know about me, about what I have to say. ***SPIN:*** Are you considering changing your number? ***King:*** Why would I do that? I music consult, mainly publicity. If you put a number out there in public, and then you change it, people would think you're not for real. ***SPIN:*** Huh? Don't you mind all the random calls? ***King:*** No. The publicity's good. I got a call from Harry Allen. The children in my community love it. They know from it that they can succeed if they put their minds and energy into what they do. ***SPIN:*** Well, thanks. I guess our readers can call you if they want to know more.

NATHANIEL WICE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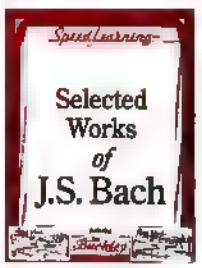

Teenage Gang Debs

Created by teen bro and sis combo Erin and Don Smith, *Teenage Gang Debs* is a 'zine for those of us corn-fed on Nick at Nite TV fare and '70s shows like *The Partridge Family*, *The Planet of the Apes*, and the immortal *Brady Bunch*. With graphics of View-Master ads and Scooby Doo, interviews with people like Hanna-Barbera's Joseph Barbera, and think-piece articles like "Cousin Oliver: The Lost Brady," *TGD* will put you in touch with your TV soul, bringing back those wonderful memories as quickly as a whiff of Play-Doh. *Available from 5812 Midhill St., Bethesda, MD 20817.*

Gun Safety

When the lives of upstanding citizens such as Geto Boys rapper Bushwick Bill are endangered, it's time to get serious. The dwarf recently lost his right eye during an early-morning episode in which he claims he was teaching his teenaged girlfriend how to cock a gun while he was drunk. Bill denies Houston police reports which allege that the girl actually shot him after the rapper first shot at her, threw a vacuum at her, and threatened to toss her baby out a window. "I just wasn't following the basic rules of gun safety," said Bill from his hospital bed.

Baltimore, Maryland

The city that gave us Billie Holiday and H.L. Mencken still breeds more than its allotted quota of mavericks, including Frank Zappa and director Barry Levinson. Filmmaker John Waters, recently ordained by the Universal Life Church, remains the area's alternative spiritual leader. And the city's businesses have a definition of urban renewal that goes beyond a new baseball stadium—they recently contributed money to a Japanese-funded project to enhance downtown by erecting a 33-foot wooden Buddha

Compiled by Mark Blackwell, Erik Davis, Gavin Edwards, Aleč Foege, Tarbox Kiersted, and Nathaniel Wice

From One Charlie

First released in 1964, Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts's *Ode to a High Flying Bird* is a wonderfully simple pen-and-ink drawing biography of jazz legend Charlie Parker. Now the book has been released in a box set, *From One Charlie*, which includes two Parker songs and five Parker-inspired originals by a quintet, including Watts on drums, led by saxophonist Peter King. *From One Charlie* is one fine tribute from one fine Charlie to another.

All together now—The Farm, *left to right*: Keith Mullin, Peter Hooton, Ben Leach, Roy Boulter, Steve Grimes, and Carl Hunter.

buying the farm

Liverpool's The Farm reaps pop rewards by infusing spiritual politics into British dance-rock.

If the Farm wasn't a band it would have to be a miniseries: Postpunk populists minus the popularity, they spent most of the '80s under a cloud, blighted by death and imprisonment of band members, and seemingly condemned to pop limbo by willful unfashionability. Even as Manchester's Ecstasy industry nourished dozens of new bands, the Farm's native Liverpool languished in the throes of a major heroin epidemic. As singer Pete Hooton tells it, things could hardly have been worse: "No one would touch us, we were like the lepers of the industry. Even local groups who were collaborating with us were advised by their record companies not to have anything to do with us."

Bizarrely, the group's nifty T-shirts remained a steady source of revenue, and their merchandising crew resolved in desperation to bankroll an indie label venture. Produce Records' first release was the Farm's version of Monkees oldie "Stepping Stone." A lackluster leap onto the dance-rock bandwagon, the single garnered modest success, sparking record company interest, but Hooton was determined to tough it out. "The majors started buzzing around offering us big figures but we were saying, 'Fuck off, we don't need it now,' " he recalls with relish. "I think what we've done with our label this last year is exactly true to the ideals of punk."

Bearing out the band's self-confidence, the follow-up "Groovy Train" was an utter revelation. From a hail of cascading arpeggios sprung forth the Farm's newfound trademark, a potent mix of breakbeats and stern rifferama underpinning defiant rock anthems. ("What happened to the attitude you used to have at school / What happened to the attitude where you broke all the rules?")

Subsequently, events overtook the band, with a No. 1 album and live shows which took on an almost messianic aspect. It was at these concerts that Pete Hooton's punk comparisons were fully realized—the guy can't sing worth a shit, but with those peerless tracks behind him he's untouchable, pure working-class royalty rapt in mutual adoration with his audience.

The Farm's common-man appeal was much touted in the British media, who cottoned to the band's downbeat fashion sense and thrilled to its supposed "hard" rep, noting that Hooton was once editor of legendary soccer fanzine *The End*. But, as bassman Carl Hunter dryly remarks, "Real hard men aren't in bands. they don't sit around learning guitar chords—they're out selling cocaine."

Sadly, the drug trade constitutes a significant part of Liverpool's underground economy, the legacy of a former major port neglected by over a decade of Conservative government. The socialist beliefs of the dock workers have not been forgotten though and, Hooton insists, political activism remains an integral part of Liverpool culture. "The only way people existed here was through struggle. It was the same in the dockyards of America, the only way they got better conditions was by going on strike. When you've got casual labor you can hire anyone."

Such talk seems at odds with the glazed hedonism of most current Brit rock, but Hooton's quick to defend his peers. "In '88 and '89 anyone with thoughts on anything other than Equity [Ecstasy] culture was gonna be ignored. We did numerous interviews where we talked about issues, but journalists just ignore them and go right ahead and talk about the easy stuff, like fashion and football."

Standing amid the debris of what the band laughingly calls its record company the singer picks up a copy of their new album *Spartacus*'s garish cover, designed like a generic soap powder package: "We might describe ourselves as socially conscious," he beams, "but we know how to sell a product as well."

STEVEN DALY

ZED NELSON

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THE PERFECT

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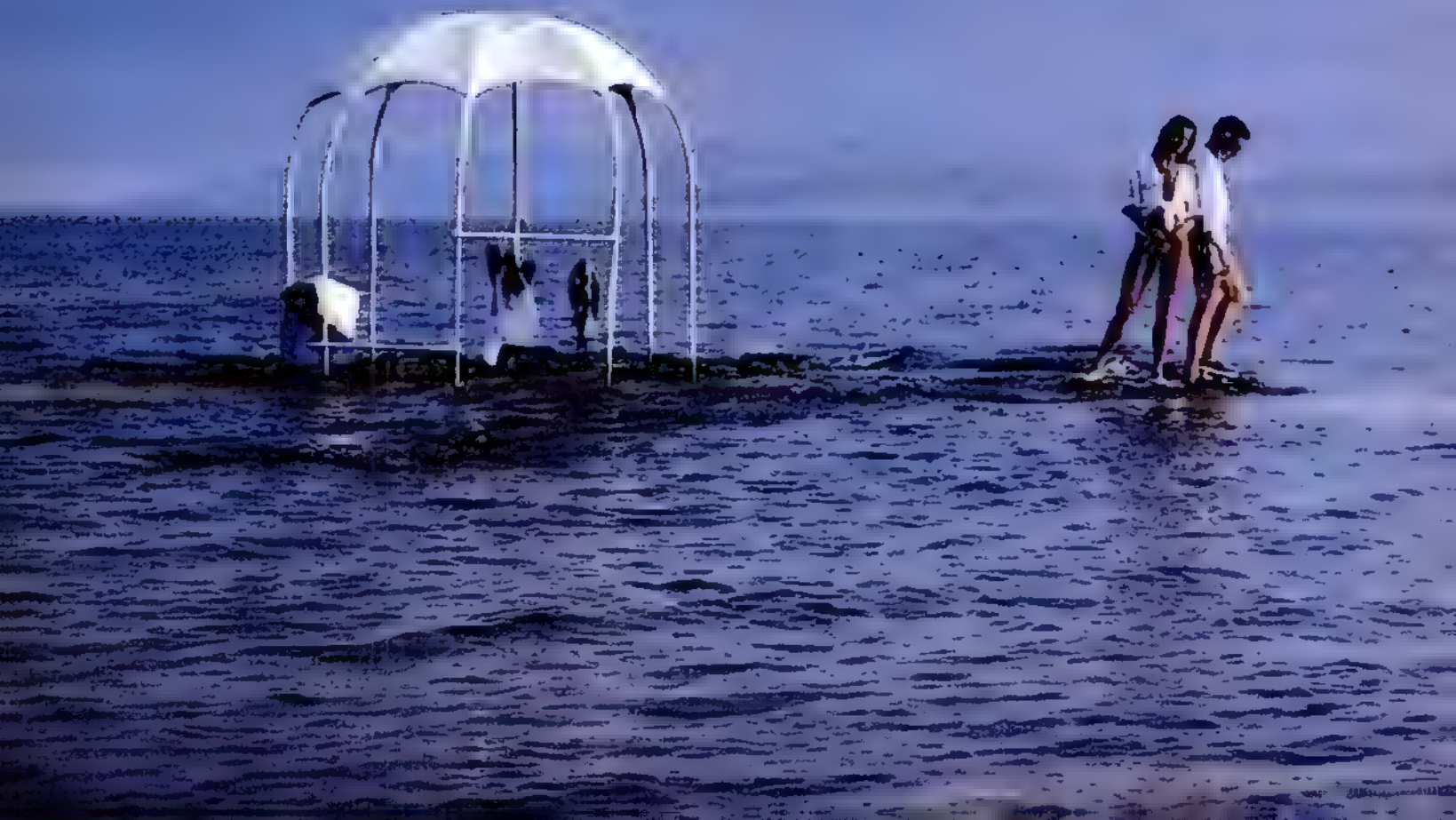

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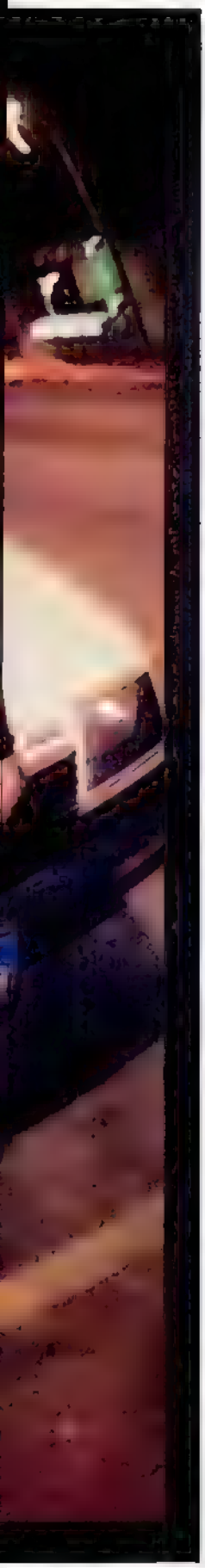
Saturday Night, Sunset Strip, Hollywood, California. 11 30 P.M. Mining the strip with some rock'n'roll vampires.



SCOTT G. SCHULMAN

in search of

the SOUL of ROCK 'n' ROLL

One of the enduring myths of latter–20th century Americana is cruising Sunset Strip on a Saturday night. I don't know if this particular myth ever had any basis in reality, but it sure as hell doesn't anymore. Fact of the matter is, you *can't* cruise Sunset Strip. They've put up roadblocks to control the traffic. Which is as good a metaphor as any for what's happened to rock'n'roll over the years. Too many roadblocks, too much damn traffic.

If rock is dead, then Hollywood must be populated with vampires. Rock'n'roll is big business in Hollywood, and nowhere is that more depressingly evident than on the Strip. More fashion show than rock opera, the Strip is literally carpeted with band flyers and unused comp tickets these days. There's a strong smell of desperation in the air, and no one seems to be having any fun.

Anyway, rock *is* dead, but that's nothing to worry about. It will continue to resurrect itself as long as no one ever figures a way around puberty. Rock ultimately fails because we all, God willing, grow up, but that failure is a necessary and very personal thing and it's not something, thankfully, you can communicate to a 16-year-old.

All of this only makes the scene on Sunset Strip more depressing, because it means something has gone wrong here. But it doesn't mean something's gone wrong everywhere. We at SPIN are sometimes guilty of looking at the world through bicoastal colored glasses, and if the soul of rock'n'roll still lives anywhere, it's certainly not in New York or Los Angeles. Hence this grand experiment: We resolved to leave our comfy music industry–driven cities and venture out across the land in search of—well, that part was a little unclear.

The soul of rock, it seems, has less to do with anything in particular than with the angle of perception you (that's *you*) bring to things. Rock's heart and soul is whatever pushes your own very particular buttons, and in that sense we were defeated before we even got started. Nobody here at SPIN could even agree on what it is, much less where to find it.

But dammit, we tried. In the following stories you may sense a bit of writerly bewilderment, or at least ambivalence, but that's only natural. Sometimes you have to throw out everything you know or think you know in order to find anything new, and it's not always a painless process. We think you'll find that it's worth it.

JIM GREER

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LOOKING FOR ROCK IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

Dazed and confused on an Indiana back road, CELIA FARBER has a punk rock flashback.

JA.ME BIONDO

Indianapolis, Indiana

SO THERE WE ARE AT LA GUARDIA Airport about to be sent off to Jesus knows where, and it was all pretty exciting and seemed, almost, like a good idea at the time. It all started when Bob, our boss, sat watching a Pepsi commercial one night and thought to himself: "We can't let it end like this. For the love of God, there has got to be more to rock'n'roll." Next thing you know, this great idea was born: Turn loose all the SPIN editors like scavengers through the belly of America—and let them *find* the pillaged original spirit of rock'n'roll. An odyssey! A holy quest! Let them roam the land and sniff it out—like bomb dogs. To hell with these promo kits and key chains and glossy photos and CDs piled up on their desks. Rock'n'roll is gasping for life and we're having lunch. Screw that.

So there we are at the airport with our suitcases, packed with clothes for all climates, because the deal was we were not to find out where we were going until we got to the airport. We knew somebody was getting sent to Alaska, but we didn't know who. Bob was looking very gleeful indeed, shuffling the envelopes with our tickets and top-secret destinations he had selected.

So my name comes up and Bob lets out a hoot of laughter and shouts, "*Indianapolis!*" This is the most fun he's had in years, our boss. I grab my ticket thinking, Thanks Bob, you're a real prince, and beeline it to the airport bar with the rest of the more or less crushed editorial staff. At least Indianapolis had some kind of race or something. Even I knew that. Not much else came to mind about Indianapolis though, except that they grow corn and Mellencamp lives there; but so what, he was born there.

We all order double Bloody Marys and Bob comes over and tries to cheer us up. Music editor Steven Daly is more worried than anyone. He's Scottish, see, so he never gave a rat's behind about what we call "rock'n'roll" in the first place. He's delighted it's dead. If it is. "I still don't understand what we're supposed to *do*," he says, staring at his USAir ticket to Toronto.

"Find the heart and soul of rock'n'roll," Bob shoots back, like it's all perfectly obvious. "Talk to the kids, knock on people's doors, ask them how they define the soul of rock'n'roll."

"You can get shot in this country doing things like that," I protest, sucking down my second Bloody Mary.

Suddenly Bob looks at his watch and starts giving us all bear hugs. "I gotta go," he says. "Good luck, folks!" He darts off like a daddy-rabbit.

Good luck, my ass. I agree with Steven Daly, even though he's Scottish—something is bogus here. It's like an if-you-have-to-ask-the-question-then-you-won't-understand-the-answer kind of situation. If you have to go out and look for the soul of rock'n'roll, then you probably wouldn't know it if it stabbed you in the butt with an ice pick. Right?

Maybe we're just too cynical and industry-addled, I'm thinking. We're always getting these letters saying what clueless bastards we are and how we should just get a life.

Anyway, off we went.

Does rock'n'roll still have its soul? If it does, what is it, and who embodies the soul of rock'n'roll? We pitched these questions to some entertainment know-it-alls. Here's what they said.

Mike D, the Beastie Boys

I remember watching John Lydon and Keith Levene from Public Image Ltd., on the *Tom Snyder Show* on late-night TV when I was about 13. It was right when their *Metal Box* LP came out. "Rock'n'roll is dead," that was their main beef. Here was Johnny wearing one crazy mohair suit on the box telling everyone that rock'n'roll died with the Sex Pistols.

In the same year a lot of bands came around—Gang of Four, the Slits, Bad Brains, Stiff Little Fingers, Specials, et cetera. It seemed for a minute that all the bogus, long-haired stoner kids were going to have nothing left to live for, because they would be forced to choose between the Bad Brains and rap. The new shit was dope. Lydon/Rotten was right for the first time. Rock was over.

DATELINE INDIANAPOLIS, Interstate 465, Pizza Hut: Boy did I feel like a clueless *boorvann* trying to explain to the waitress that it wasn't just a club I was looking for but a club or bar or basement—or whatever they had, where people were actually having some kind of *true emotional experience* over some form of rock'n'roll or related cultural expression. Like, the kind of experience people may not be having in hipper-than-thou places like New York. She looked at me real funny. "You want the name of a club, is that it?" she asked in thick Bible-Belt drawl. "I can give *yew* the name of a *cluub*." "Great," I sighed. She scribbled down a name and address with the assurance that this was the place for me. I thanked her and headed over there. It was called Bentley's.

As soon as I walked in I had that sinking feeling. The place was pretty big. One wall was covered with a gigantic Budweiser sign. A terrible, terrible metal band was onstage—like a friendly, neighborhood metal band—and the guitarist had a V-shaped guitar with big white polka dots on it. (In Farber's Inferno, an entire circle of hell will be reserved for the people who make those guitars. They will have to swim around for all eternity in a gluey pitch, and the sky above them will be one giant MTV screen with millions of morons standing in a windy cornfield, soloing on V-shaped neon pink and polka-dotted guitars, loud as fuck and out of tune.)

They all looked about 40 years old and they kept jumping off the drum podium every time they played a power chord, even though everybody was just sitting there, looking really bored. I'm sorry, I don't mean to sound snobbish, but I have to tell it like it was. They didn't look like they were having one stitch more fun than anybody else I've ever seen in a club. Just because you live in Indianapolis doesn't mean you're necessarily bursting with soul.

It was tragic. And it got worse—they started playing Led Zeppelin covers. They played "Rock and Roll," and the drums were all wrong and it didn't swing at all but nobody noticed, so all these women with big frizzy hair and late-night cable TV telephone-sex–type clothes suddenly got up and started shaking their stuff for these guys, who then not only jumped off the drum podium even more, but also started skidding across the stage on their knees and shaking their heads and playing loud, unforgivable guitar solos. I sat slumped in my chair, glaring like an old angry gorilla in a cage, who can't wait to hurl dung at somebody who tries to get near it.

I know I was supposed to talk to these kids but I just could not bring myself to do it. All I could think was: Sometimes I wish rock'n'roll had never happened. Just like I wish the Exxon oil spill had never happened. Sometimes I feel like—this is crazy: My world is filled with rude, emotionally stunted overgrown children who can't play their instruments and have eggs for brains and just want to take my money and sell me some illusion about rebellion and leave me half deaf and full of snotty values. And not only that, we're supposed to spend our lives *glorifying* it—pretending it has some sort of positive impact on humanity—when the people who trek across mountains bringing medical supplies to earthquake victims, *they* probably listen to classical music or something.

My mother would yell, "Why is it I work in a mental hospital and your boyfriend looks more insane than anybody there?" I told her he was really smart and that he had built his own guitar.

The next place I wound up was at a bar called the Slippery Noodle, where an R&B band was playing. They were called Rice and Beans, I think, and they were pretty good, but it wasn't like my arm hairs suddenly stood straight up or anything. This whole thing is a little like saying go find God, and the thing about it is you can only find God, or rock'n'roll, or UFOs or whatever, *when you're not looking*. You can't force these things. If you could then there would be no problem. Life would be swell.

I met a lovely young man who was in a band that played around Indianapolis a lot. He said, "There isn't really any scene here because for one thing everybody *leaves*. I want to leave sometimes, too, but I think it's important for musicians to stay here and try to shape an identity. We don't have anything that defines us. We don't have any *attitude*. We just have like, flat land, and cornfields. And the race. There's no edge. Not like what you're looking for. But there are people, like me and my band and some other bands we know, that are really trying to change that."

After six more clubs filled with identical-looking people in shopping mall clothes and frizzy hair, dancing to Vanilla Ice and Paula Abdul, I started to give up. I sat on the curb outside a club for about three hours waiting for a taxi, thinking, This is the end of my life, right here.

Luckily I had the book I'd bought at the airport: *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, of all things. The only reason I bring it up is that there's this line in the book that really said it all. It's a scene where all these Very Intelligent Gentlemen are sitting around having an endless discourse on Life, and Lady Chatterley, who's sewing and not allowed to say anything, thinks they're all pretty full of it, in spite of everything. The way she describes that feeling is, and here's the line: "Somehow there was a cat but it wouldn't jump."

And this is what I thought, no joking around: God, what a perfect sentence. All of life, except for maybe 1 percent, is like that. The cat will only jump a few times in your life, and that's if you're lucky. Rock'n'roll is strictly about making that cat jump and when it does—there's your "soul"—you know the feeling: like your blood suddenly turned to rocket fuel and you want to start smashing things or diving off cliffs. It's the opposite of classical music, but it's not the opposite of love. It's Dionysus electrified, and it's easier when you're young. The older you get the more you start to say, "Fuck the cat, who needs it? I'm gonna mow the lawn." But when you're young, you're too angry—you think you're a freak, and rock'n'roll is the only place you can cash in on those feelings. The soul of rock'n'roll is the soul of the ugly duckling who knows it's really a swan. But once

continued on page 106

KILLER
Moments before detonation
LOOP
PERFORMANCE SUNGLASSES BY BAUSCH & LOMB

HOT AND BOTHERED

Floridian death metal — an E-ticket ride through hell in the land of amusement parks and serial killers. It's loud and it's ugly, and as your guide LAUREN SPENCER reminds you, keep all hands and feet inside the ride until it comes to a complete stop.

"What's happening in Florida is bizarro; bands like Deicide and Death are total Satan metal. I think they really have something to say to the youth of America."

—Thurston Moore, Sonic Youth guitarist, as quoted in the metal magazine-on-video, Video Sheet Metal

Tampa, Florida

LABELING THE FLORIDIAN METAL SCENE "total Satan" music isn't quite right, but there's definitely some heavy shit coming out of the Gator State. Aggressive, brutal, raw, uncomfortable, insane, bloody. . . . Wait a minute, this is the land of sunshine, orange juice, Anita Bryant, and Disney World—an amusement park of astounding proportions, twice the size of Manhattan and where, according to a recent *Time* magazine article, more than nine tons of manmade snow fall at Sea World's "Penguin Encounter" daily. But it's also an outpost of America that has spawned a few Ted Bundy wannabes. And the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints owns ten times more land in Florida than Disney. I came to Tampa in search of the bloody heart of rock'roll. I found it. *Bizarro* indeed.

It's a safe bet that Florida bands like Death, Deicide, Malevolent Creation, and Obituary are saying *something* to the youth of America—and what they're saying isn't pretty. The music is speed metal one step beyond, almost too fast to slam your head to. The vocals scream about all manner of death and destruction—heavy-metal fantasies plucked straight from the underworld—a 14-year-old's daydream, but just like in never-never land, Who really wants to grow up anyway?

THE YOUNG MUSICIAN WHO WALKS INTO Morrisound Recording in Tampa—where much of this hell is laid down for public consumption—has just taken a major step toward adulthood. He's a proud new dad, and like most proud new dads he is carrying around a few Polaroids of the little dude to show his friends. Though unlike most new fathers, Glen Benton, bassist and intoner for Deicide, has an inverted six-inch cross branded into his forehead, which today is covered with a metal-plate crucifix, and his son has been named Daemon—the Latin version meaning master of the supernatural. The "little devil" has already got a song dedicated to him called "Satan Spawn the Cacodaemon," which will be on Deicide's next album. Benton goes on to explain that one of the best parts of watching the birth was the placenta coming out afterward and how he tried to talk the doctor into letting him take it home with him. "I have a jar of formaldehyde at the house and I wanted to add the placenta to the collection," Glen elaborates. "I've got my tonsils and my grandmother's kidney stones in there. But the doctor wouldn't let me because the afterbirth starts to decay and can spread infection."

Benton's band Deicide, which means "the killing of all that is holy," is an extreme example of this scene. The band spreads its own death-metal infection to all that are willing to listen. Along with Benton, members Eric and Brian Hoffman on guitars and Steve Asheim on drums are heavily into self-mutilation and the deliverance through their songs of the gospel according to Beelzebub. Benton reburns the cross into his forehead the third Sunday of every month, explaining, "My crosses would always go flying off when we played, so I figured I'd make it permanent. I usually keep my plate on it because when people see it all deep, they freak. It's a trademark of my beliefs." With songs like "Oblivious to Evil" and "Sacrificial Suicide" it ain't much of a secret what those beliefs are, but if you're still in the dark, here are some helpful hints from the master's mouth: "I straight out say that I want to kill Christians. I won't use subliminal words to get my point across. Christianity is like love your neighbor and let everybody walk all over

Deicide's Glen Benton: A Floridian death-metal dude for our times?

Photographs /Art by Rene Miville

you; in the satanic beliefs it's about controlling your destiny and being your own god." At their live shows you can be your own personal Jesus with the help of a few bloody props. While the band plays in full-on spiked armor, a slew of cat livers and guts are turned loose on the audience members, who thoughtfully throw them back on the band where they will inevitably get stuck on the Deicide dudes' metal. "The whole place becomes encased in the smell of rotting flesh and it becomes one large food fight," says Benton. "When the meat is going around with the nails on the armor and there's guts hanging off you, it's insane. This stuff is real."

What the hell is happening in Florida?

A friend of mine who'd interviewed Benton recently got this choice theory from him: "It's so fucking hot down here, all you can think of is hell." That almost sums it up, but there must be more to it than that.

It's a safe bet that Florida bands like Death, Deicide, and Obituary are saying something to the youth of America—and what they're saying isn't pretty.

Left to right: Death, in the studio with producer Scott Burns; Tampa's new breed, the Guff; 98Rocks's Brain Medlin partner in crime, Keith Collins.

THESE BANDS MAKE SLAYER LOOK mellow, which is a weird thought," says Scott Burns, producer extraordinaire and the man most likely to be found listed on the sleeve of a slew of death metal recordings. He reigns over Tampa's Morrisound Recording where bands from all over the world come to enlist his services. "I don't think there's anything prophetic about death metal," he continues. "I think it's an extreme movement for the time and it's killer but in a couple of years another extreme movement will take its place."

Writer Kevin Sharp says, "Ten years ago it was Black Flag, now it's just packaged a little differently. There will always be a fourteen-year-old kid who'll want to piss off the parents or neighbors."

Back in 1983, Chuck Schuldiner must have been in the mood to piss someone off when he formed Mantis. Eight months later the name of the band was changed to Death and Schuldiner is given credit by many as the man who kick-started death metal into action. According to Burns, "Chuck is the modern-day founder of death metal—not to say there wasn't dark metal happening before, but at the time nobody had ever coined the name death metal and nobody had ever taken such an extreme stance as to call a band Death."

Tom Morris, co-owner of Morrisound Recording, chuckles. "They were gonna call it Chuck metal, but it didn't sound right."

Borivoj Krgin, assistant editor at *Metal Maniacs* magazine and someone who's been instrumental in getting a lot of these bands signed to labels, adds, "Chuck was basically the only thing around in Florida in that genre of music for quite a while and that's why I think he's had a lot of problems, especially early on, finding members."

Indeed Schuldiner has gone through an onslaught of personnel changes and, as with any scene that becomes incestuous, this can lead to all manner of bad blood and rumors.

"I started when this was the most unacceptable music ever," says Schuldiner. "People would laugh at us and say what you're doing is a joke. When the band started we were in high school and everyone else would play covers and mainstream stuff. They thought we were just noise. Everyone told me you'll never make it, that music will never be popular."

But per usual, the rest of the world just needed some time to catch up, and eight years later it seems people are ready to take the journey to hell. Death—currently rounded out with Sean Reinert and Paul Masvidal from Miami's Cynic and Steve Digiorgio from San Francisco's Sadus—is recording its fourth album, and bands like Obituary and Malevolent Creation are spawning madly, as record labels hatch the eggs. "It's the most amazing thing how easy it is now to get signed," says Schuldiner. "You can almost guarantee that if you're from Florida in a death metal band you'll get signed. Death metal, Florida—it's the connection."

Bands may come to Tampa to suck off the scene, but as far as catching any death metal shows live in the city, this is less of a reality. There are a few ways to find the source. There's Ace's record store, run by Frank Dancsecs. It has the most extensive selection of metal this side of the Mason-Dixon line. Morbid Angel's Dave Vincent and Obituary's James Murphy both work there when they're not on the road, and although it's only open on the weekends (due to the fact that the store is in a flea market) kids flock to it to get a clue on what's happening. There's also *The Pit*, a radio show on 98-Rock that is overseen by Brian Medlin and his partner Keith Collins, formerly of Savatage—a seminal Florida metal band. Every Saturday night from midnight to two they mix it up with everything from Sacred Reich to Scatterbrain, while supporting the scene with in-studio interviews and tracks by local bands. All three of these guys are credited with bringing Tampa's brutal sound to the rest of the baffled world.

On the live tip, a club like the Rock-It, tucked in between fast food chains, car dealerships, and strip malls, is not unlike any hole in the wall found in Any City, U.S.A. With half-dressed cocktail waitresses with names like Bambi and spandex-stretched metal dudes riffing their way through hour-long sets, you can bet your crucifix there won't be any reality expansion here. These clubs depend on girls who'll attract guys who'll buy each other drinks and then buy each other more drinks while halfway ignoring the band onstage. A user-friendly experience. There are exceptions—a band like Silent Scream, which is loud and fast, seems to be on the edge of aggressive. But it's not extreme or misunderstood.

Those bands are usually found rehearsing in the rec rooms of nice suburban houses, where mom may be watching *Wheel of Fortune* while her son and his band make beautiful noise in the next room. The Guff is one of those bands, and while not on the pure death metal train, the band's lyrics are a slap of reality and their music is definitely loud enough to get attention. Burns produced the Guff's demo tape, which has done well on metal stations the world over. "But it's easy to get overlooked here if you're not death metal," says guitarist Mike Cutolo.

"That sound has definitely fazed out a lot of bands that were in existence a year ago," says bassist Joel DeAngelis.

"The stuff we play is aggressive," Cutolo continues, "but when we opened for Deicide we were sur-

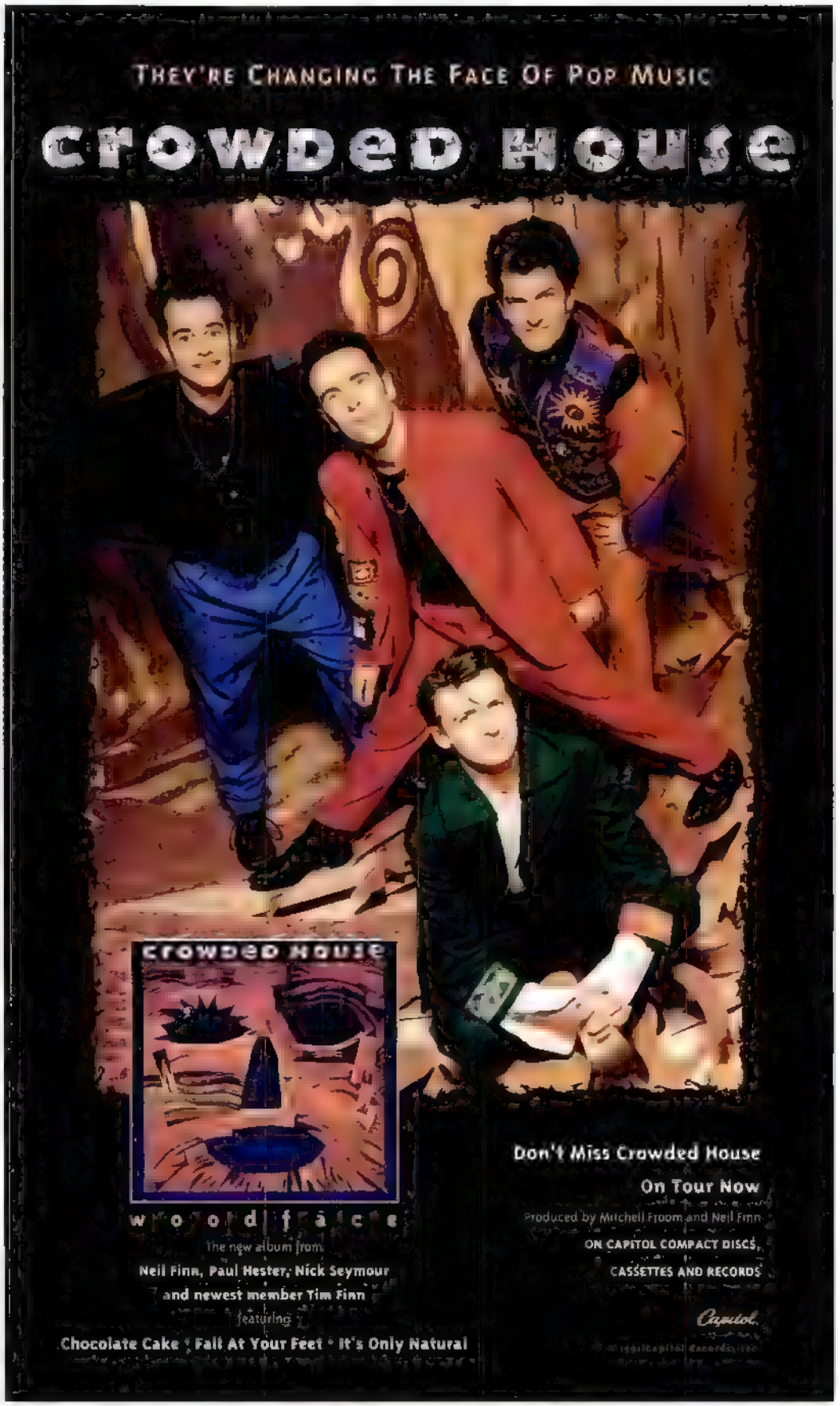
prised at the audience liking us."

"The Guff may have a harder time because they're from Tampa," says Burns. "Because nowadays when people think of this city, they think of death-metal bands. It's the only viable source of stuff coming out of here."

And a reason for unnecessary organizations like the PMRC to turn their wicked attention toward Tampa bands, hoping to quench the stench. At the beginning of this year a cassette of Death's second release *Leprosy* was found next to the corpse of a Seattle man who'd been beaten to death with a log. "I feel sad that our name had to be tied up with that," says Schuldiner. "Because when I came up with it, it described the music we were playing. It would be dumb to have our extreme music be called Summertime Daisies. So it upsets me when things like that happen 'cause I'm not some person who tries to portray our name in that clichéd way. Sometimes I think people expect me to act out the name and be wild. I'm not.

"Unfortunately some people only see the chaos that's connected with the scene," he continues. "And all that negativity fuels the PMRC. It enables those people to conquer our type of music. During *Spiritual Healing* [Death's last album] the record company wasn't going to print my lyrics because they said they found them offensive, which is unreal because they all deal with every day subjects. "Living Monstrosity" is about cocaine babies, its a brutal topic that's on the news and in the paper. Songs about abortion, execution—all these subjects are in the news every day. But even if I wrote songs about pink bunnies, they'd still find something to get upset about. I'd like to change people's perceptions about this scene, maybe do some benefit shows for homeless children, something I feel strongly about. It would be interesting—a band called Death do a benefit for life."

Hmm—life, death, full circle. Maybe things aren't quite as hectic as I thought they would be in sunny Florida. Maybe it's time to take a trip to Vedaland, a new playground for higher consciousness near Disney World that's supposed to put man in harmony with nature. Maybe the maid at my hotel didn't think I was sacrificing people in my room because of all the death-metal tapes I had. Maybe I've had deli owners in New York City be ruder to me than men with crosses burned into their foreheads. Aah, maybe I'll move to Florida.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HEY
YOU!

KEEPING THE FAITH

Is the Replacements' Paul Westerberg the soul of rock'n'roll, or just the heel? Interview by MARK BLACKWELL.

IT'S 1991. ROCK'N'ROLL IS AS dead as a doornail. Or is it? What does that mean anyway, and to be honest, who really cares? That's what this whole issue of SPIN is about, in a way, but the fact that we "experts" sit in a New York office and try to figure it out almost disqualifies us from even voting. That's why we all got out and tried to find the soul of rock'n'roll in the first place. The very fact that we're hunting down rock's "soul" implies that rock is dead, because if rock was alive, the soul would obviously be right there living and breathing in the chart-topping "rock music" of today. Yeah, whatever.

In 1979, the Who wished rock'n'roll a prosperous life with "Long Live Rock" and then continued to flog it to death for another decade or so. But if rock's been killed, nobody's really innocent and nobody's really guilty. You're either too young to be blamed or you're too old. You're too stupid or you're too smart. Basically you just have to take what you can get, and keep your mouth shut.

So who represents whatever it is that rock'n'roll has supposedly lost? Just the process of thinking about rock'n'roll too much kills it, but nevertheless, after a great deal of thought, SPIN chose Paul Westerberg, leader of Minneapolis's legendary Replacements, to be the living representative of the soul of rock'n'roll. Why? You figure it out.

The phone rings in my hotel room. "Hey man, this is Pablo." I have no idea who it is at first. "What's up?" I answer. "Let's get this sucker over with," the voice replies. Oh cool, it's time to meet the "subject" for dinner and discuss rock'n'roll. But then again it's 1991, and rock'n'roll is dead as a doornail. Or is it?

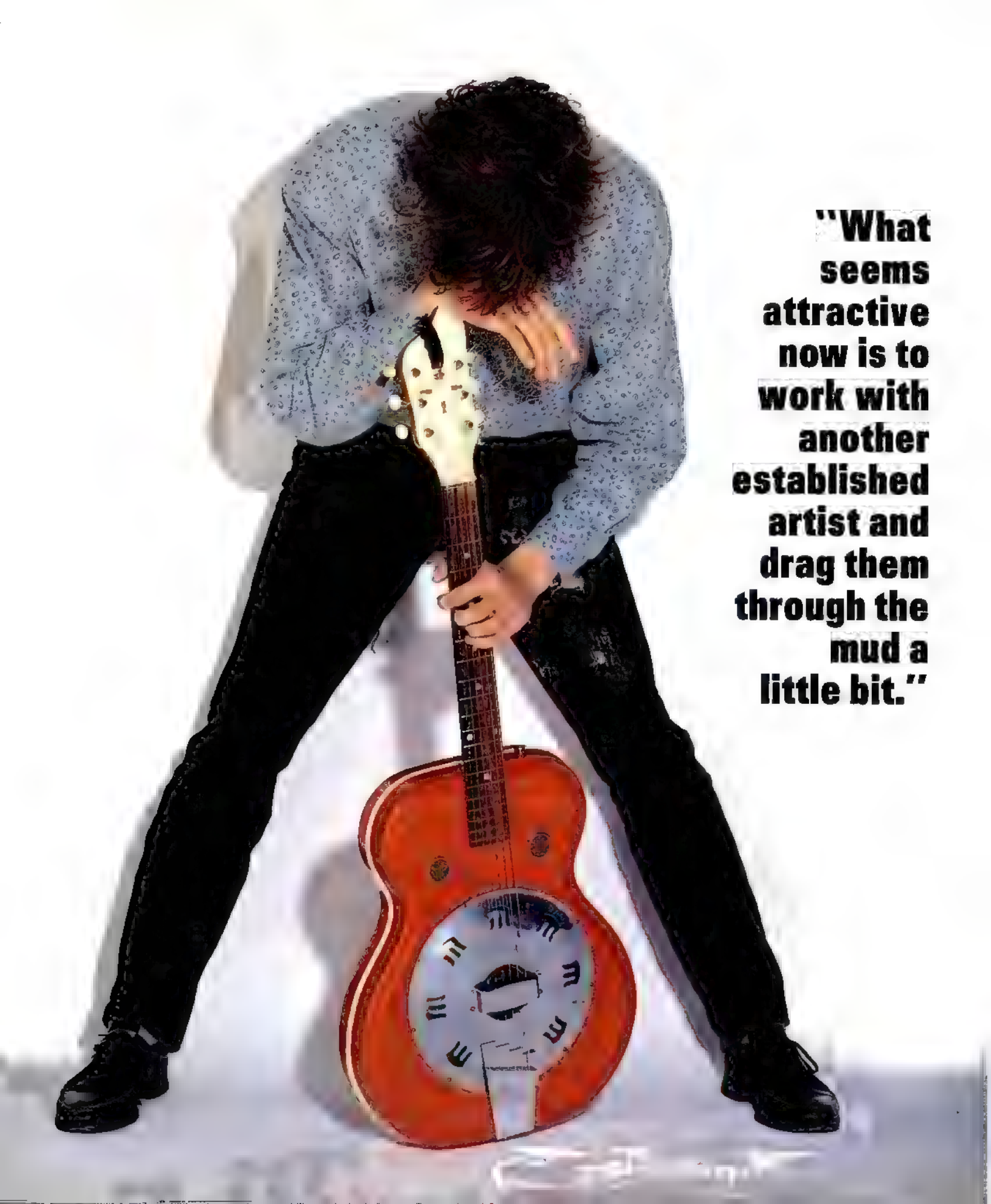
SPIN: Do you feel you adequately represent the soul of rock'n'roll?

Westerberg: It's a flattering idea. My first feeling is no, but then my next one is who else really does? I'm not really casting a vote for myself, but I can't think of anyone who really carries the torch. Maybe Keith Richards or someone like that, but that's been written about forever. I sure won't sell on the cover of SPIN. You'll have to have a girl with big tits on the next one.

I don't need to see myself on the cover of a magazine. If it helps attendance or sells records, I do it. Being on the cover is in the category of a cheap thrill. I can smile about it and go, "That's awfully nice." I know a lot of people will see it and get excited about it, but basically it means that someone who hasn't heard my music's gonna recognize me at the 7-Eleven.

SPIN: What is the soul of rock'n'roll?

Photographs by Jesse Frohman



"What seems attractive now is to work with another established artist and drag them through the mud a little bit."

Westerberg: To me the soul of rock'n'roll is mistakes. Mistakes and making mistakes work for you. In general, music that's flawless is usually uninspired. The people who go with the flow and go with the mistakes and turn that into something special are the ones that show guts—that's what we've always tried to do. The people who shy away from change and mistakes and play it safe have no business playing rock'n'roll. I never trust someone who thinks they know exactly what they want, and goes in the studio and gets it. That might be their *art* but it's usually shitty rock'n'roll.

SPIN: Is rock dead?

Westerberg: Well, is *jazz* dead? That's the way I look at it. Rock'n' roll is underground once again, but it won't die, just like jazz won't. It's not the popular music of the day but it's not dead. R.E.M. went to No. 1, but I'm sorry, they don't play rock'n' roll. They have their own niche which is great, but it's not rock'n' roll. They don't do it for me. The Black Crowes are rock'n'roll and are great at what they do, but it's very pedestrian.

SPIN: Is Elvis King?

Westerberg: Elvis didn't even write songs. Elvis was a performer. He rocked, but what did he really change other than people's hairstyles? Bob Dylan is probably much closer to the soul of rock'n'roll. Or Gene Vincent maybe.

SPIN: What about somebody like Alex Chilton? You made him a rock hero in your song.

Westerberg: No. I don't know what Alex represents. Now I listen to his new Rhino compilation, and it's like, I can't make up my mind whether Alex was some brilliant chameleon or just a guy who fucking lost it real quick. I almost regret writing that song. It's sad, because kids will come and ask me about Alex and you'll see this look in their eyes, and they think he's some guy in leather pants that jumps from amplifiers or something. It's like, if they only knew.

SPIN: You did a song about Johnny Thunders, too.

Westerberg: Johnny had everything except talent. He was frightening and beautiful and mean at the same time. Like a child. He comes pretty close to my idea of the soul of rock'n'roll. It's unfortunate that that always goes hand in hand with drug abuse and all that, which isn't rock'n'roll.

SPIN: You certainly had your share of that.

Westerberg: Our teachers were Thunders, Chilton, the Faces, the Stones, the Pistols, the Ramones, and all the other people who were basically fuck-ups. Had our favorite music been Up With People it would have been different. It was a nice excuse to have someone to look up to and sort of make sense out of what we were doing to ourselves. Had there been no bad examples I don't think we would have taken it to that terrible level.

SPIN: Is it less spontaneous now that you're not falling drunk off the stage?

Westerberg: Not at all. I dove headfirst into the crowd the other night after I got hit in the face with a beer. Before the cup hit the floor I was flying off the stage in the direction of where it came from. It was an instinct. It's good not to think when you play rock'n'roll.

SPIN: Did you expect to be as successful as you've been?

Westerberg: When we started, what we were doing was underground, but there was the promise that what we were doing was the Next Big Thing. We were about to burst with all the bands alongside of us into the mainstream. We were a punk band. I was surprised that dance music took such a strong hold, but everything comes in phases.

SPIN: You guys rose up from Minneapolis about the same time Prince did.

Westerberg: Yeah. Prince is pretty rock'n'roll himself. What he does is daring as hell. He takes chances, and I get the feeling that he doesn't know exactly what he's doing. I think he throws shit against the wall and sees what sticks. He's full of ideas. Coming out of Minneapolis he had as big of an influence on us as someone like Hüsker Dü did.

SPIN: What's Minneapolis like now?

Westerberg: The town holds less and less for me. I don't know what's really happening on the scene. I was never really a big part of it. The scene is the young people, and it keeps changing over. The click. When it was our "time," I always hated the old fuckers who used to hang around. I remember how that felt, so I'm not going to hang around and try to be a part of the scene.

SPIN: As far as new bands in general, you're into the Goo Goo Dolls, aren't you?

Westerberg: Yeah, they're really good. I never got sick of them when they played with us. I think they come across dumber than they are, but it's cool. They've got a future. They can write and play and sing. I'd like them to have a producer and shit. Get some suits and chicks and horns, and they're on their way. That was the best band we had open for us.

SPIN: I heard that opening up on Tom Petty's recent tour was a big disaster for you.

Westerberg: We thought it was going to make us very successful, popular, and famous for very cheap reasons. But we didn't go out with a very positive attitude of "Let's win these people over." It was like, "On your knees you bastards! The mighty 'Mats have arrived." We were met with indifference. A few nights it was really unfair. Rock'n' roll is unfair, I guess. We played brilliantly at least twice and got no reaction. Middle America Petty fans don't want it, unless they've seen it on TV first, or heard it on the radio. But to give them the real deal, live and in person right off the bat, is a little too much for them. But even our own fans don't respond some nights.

SPIN: You guys definitely have a strong cult following, but it's not as high-profile as some band like the Cure's or the Grateful Dead's.

Westerberg: We really do. It's funny because there's no uniform. It's neat because then they're all regular, and in that way they're exactly like me. I can fit in crowds easily. I can get lost in the crowd. I don't stand out like Robert Smith from the Cure would. I'm invisible. Can you see soul? We're getting at something here. People follow us every night. I can always spot them. I get a lot of letters slipped to me that say things like, "I've always listened to your stuff and I'd like to meet you and everything but I really don't want to." It's what makes me keep doing this.

SPIN: There are all these rumors about Winona Ryder being a die-hard fan and following you around.

Westerberg: I don't want to say anything about it.

SPIN: People will still talk.

Westerberg: Uh huh. Wait till they hear about me and Phyllis Diller.

SPIN: Are you still having fun?

Westerberg: I've had more fun out onstage this time out than I did last time. But I'm uninspired. I don't consider myself a born performer. I try to keep it fun and when it's not I want to throw it all away. I find myself onstage wanting to create something new. I get mad at the other guys for not being able to read my mind.

SPIN: Do you still feel like one fourth of a band?

Westerberg: It's up to everyone whether you're an individual or just a guy in a band. I straddle the line. I've done enough things by myself and let the band do enough things where it's not like I've worked with a group my whole career. I was planning on the last record being my record when I started writing the songs. And then they [the record company] said no, they wanted the Replacements.

SPIN: Will your next record be with the Replacements?

Westerberg: No. The way I'm thinking right now, no. I don't know when it will happen either. Anything is possible. Things go through my mind like maybe even joining another band. I'd like to work with some unknown people, but what seems attractive now is to work with another established artist and drag them through the mud a little bit. Fuck somebody's career up. There are a few things in the works that I can't talk about right now, but you'd be surprised. Some people are interested and it's very flattering. If it brought my sort of punk spirit out, I couldn't resist.

SPIN: Now that we've proclaimed you the embodiment of the soul of rock'n'roll, I guess anything's possible.

Westerberg: Yeah, thanks a lot. I owe you one.

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Oh, What a Beautiful Morning

JIM GREER travels to Tulsa and concludes that it's a nice place to live, but you wouldn't want to visit.

tulsa, oklahoma

IF YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF IN Tulsa, Oklahoma, on a Monday night with nothing to do, I've got a tip for you. Go down to a club called Ikon on South Peoria. It'll probably look closed, but don't let that bother you—just walk right in. If it's anything like the time I went, the doors won't be locked.

You won't have any trouble getting a seat. The dance floor will be empty, too, but that's understandable since there'll be no music playing. Your spirits will lift when you see there's no crowd at the bar, but they may plummet again when, upon arriving, you notice there's also no bartender at the bar. What's a poor boy/girl to do?

Well, you could do what I did. You could politely yell, "Hello, hello, anybody there?" and receive no answer from the neatly stacked chairs. You could go upstairs to the office and find no one to complain to. You could go back downstairs and fidget briefly with your conscience, then duck behind the bar and pour yourself a many-fingered glass of fine Jack Daniel's whiskey. You could offer a toast to the invisible owners of Ikon, and to its invisible patrons. "One half of the soul of rock'n'roll is theft," you could say. "Sorry. And cheers." And then you could do it again, because the other half of the soul of rock'n'roll is repetition.

If you ever find yourself in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on a Monday night with nothing to do, I've got another tip for you. Get the hell out of town. About the only two things you can do are screw/get screwed and kill/get killed, and after surveying the available prey, given the [illegible] choice I'm still not sure I wouldn't pick the latter. On Tuesday, of course, things improve, as the Big Splash Water Park opens for business. Friday, the day I arrived, is Hold Your Grandmother Hostage Day. This sport seems to be a big hit among the locals. On this particular Friday, Mahlon "Butch" Bastion of 4141 South Rockford Avenue was "it." Unfortunately, he was disqualified when he blew his brains out in his barricaded apartment later in the day. Saturday night is prom night.

Fast food and prayer towers in the land of corn.

JAIME BIONDO

I'M LIVIN' ON TULSA TIME," ERIC Clapton once sang, and I always thought he meant the time difference between Oklahoma and the East or West Coast, but now I know better. Time in Tulsa is almost a visible thing. It has a palpable essence; you can bite off chunks and chew thoughtfully, spitting out hours and minutes at leisure. It took a while to get the hang of this, but after watching a number of gentlemen with bulging jaws shoot streams of brown juice onto the pavement from the windows of their pickup trucks, I began to get the idea.

Tulsa, Oklahoma. Oil capital of the world. Water capital of the Southwest. Aerospace capital of Oklahoma. Actually, Tulsa is a very nice place. A beautiful place, even. The 380,000 or so people living within its city limits seem on the whole quite happy to be here, and who can blame them? It's a very peaceful city, a nice place to raise a family. Unfortunately, I was not sent here to raise a family. I was sent to

the soul of rock'n'roll?

continued from page 36

Willie Dixon

The soul of rock'n'roll is the *blues*, the root of all American music. Without the roots, there would be no fruits.

Lloyd Cole

Stupidity and Billy Idol are the soul of rock'n'roll.

Kim Deal, The Pixies

Dancing at weddings is the spirit of rock'n'roll. I think my sister and the Marquis de Sade embody it.

Aretha Franklin

The soul of rock'n'roll is all in the rhythm. The rhythm is the beginning and the end, and in the middle are the lyrics, which serve to translate that rhythm.

Ted Nugent

Rock'n'roll could have come only from the U.S.A., because this country embodies a unique spirit of uninhibitedness, freedom, and a sense of independence. The freedoms we live have a price tag that inspires an adventurous tension necessary to the sexual pulse of their rhythms and twang. The creators, artists, and participants who thrive on this musical form reek of that attitude. I love that. I think real short skirts on females and anybody who plunges headfirst into the white water rapids of life, lives it up, and tells the world to kiss their ass embodies the soul of rock'n'roll.

Ann Magnuson, Bongwater

A shot of Wild Turkey with a beer chaser and Suzi Quatro are, to me, the essence of rock'n'roll.

Eazy-E

Reality, man. And N.W.A embodies it.

continued on page 68

find the soul of rock'n'roll, but that's not Tulsa's problem, it's mine.

Rock has no real place in this town, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Sure, there's a seamy underbelly to all the rampant *niceness* here (COLD POP AND A KIND WORD reads the sign outside of the Git'n'Go), but everybody's got a seamy underbelly (you should see mine). It's no big deal.

Cruising around the highways and byways of Tulsa, past the Golden Pawn shop and the Route 66 one-stop (Remember Route 66? It used to go through here), past Bud's Super Saver and Bud's Pharmacy and Bud's Everything Else—either everyone here is named Bud or Bud is one rich guy—past the church signs that read THANK GOD FOR ED'S SAFE RETURN, and A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE?, past the American Beef Corporation and the Aerosmith graffiti on the abandoned warehouse next to it, you get the sense that the pursuit of nothing is a full-time, lifelong occupation here. I like that.

I pull into Bud's Liquor Store. A very nice, matronly woman (Mrs. Bud?) behind the checkout counter eyes my Florida driver's license suspiciously.

"Most places aren't taking out-of-state driver's licenses right now," she says.

I clutch my bottle of Jack Daniel's defensively. "But I'm thirty years old," I whine.

"Can't be too careful," she says, ringing up my purchase. "Saturday is prom night."

The Soul Food of Rock'n'Roll

Rock'n'roll, as everybody knows, has a fast-food heart, and near as I can tell Tulsa has the highest concentration of fast-food restaurants in the free world. Which can only mean one thing, or maybe nothing, or maybe a lot of different little things. It's hard to say. In any case, such was the cornucopia of culinary delights that I was almost able to eat both lunch and dinner at a different place every day for the length of my stay. My only complaint—no White Castle. *Quel* drag. Some capsule reviews:

ARBY'S: I was eating here late one night (Beef'n'Cheddar, potato cakes, large Coke) when I noticed a small group of local youths in T-shirts furtively smoking Marlboros a few tables away. Every so often one of them'd glance over at me and then turn back and whisper some smart-ass comment to his friends. Eventually I got sick of this. I sauntered casually over, and with my friendliest New York manner said, "Hi. I'm a writer. I work for a magazine called SPIN, and I eat like a pig. Got a problem with any of that?"

BURGER KING: Their Bacon Double Cheeseburger, which I normally really like, was a disappointment. The bun was soggy and the cheese wasn't even melted. They did give me a Susan B. Anthony dollar coin with my change, however, which I will carry forever in my pocket as a lucky talisman. God knows why.

On the theory that the search for the soul of rock'n'roll is more or less akin to the search for God, I paid a visit to Oral Roberts University.

McDONALD'S: A sublime experience. Two Filet-O-Fishes, large fries, and a large Coke. Mickey D's fish sandwich beats everybody else's hands down; don't let anyone tell you different.

SUBWAY: A bit off the beaten track, but worth it. If you say "super" when you order a sandwich, you get double the meat for only a dollar more. Plus their large drink is perhaps the largest of its kind I've ever encountered. One of the few places that didn't pipe in Muzak but instead played the local classic Coke, um, I mean classic rock, station—I heard Jackson Browne's "Running on Empty" and got thirsty all over again. Only 25 cents for a refill.

TACO BELL: I never would have thought that people actually exist who say things like, "So you mean, all that stuff on the ninety-nine-cent menu costs ninety-nine cents?" But there are, and they do, and the girl who took my order didn't know how to give me a receipt. (I needed the receipt for my expenses—you don't think I could afford to eat here if I was paying for it?) So I took a bath on this meal to the tune of $4.69.

WENDY'S: Definitely the fast-food joint as far as Tulsa is concerned. I don't think there was a man, woman or child in here under 200 pounds, and after sampling their delicious double cheeseburger, large fries, and large Coke, it's easy to see why.

Disneyland for Christians

On the theory that the search for the soul of rock'n'roll is more or less akin to the search for God, I paid a visit to Oral Roberts University. I immediately fell in love with the architecture—the whole place seemed to be constructed out of papier-mâché spray-painted white and ornamented liberally with gold leaf. The only buildings open were the awe-inspiring Prayer Tower and the campus bookstore. I opted for the Prayer Tower, a massive Christmas tree ornament whose design, like most of the ORU buildings, seemed like some '60s architect's skewed vision of the future (ORU was built in 1965).

I don't really see a conflict between religion and rock'n'roll. Rock music has always had an element of religiosity, or at least spirituality, to it, even in its most carnal-intensive form. Both religion and rock at their best produce the sort of spine-shivers that are as yet the best measure we've developed of godliness, or at least goodliness. The problems begin when, in either case, someone tries to formalize the way in which we achieve those shivers. When that happens to rock'n'roll, you end up with Bruce Springsteen. When it happens to religion, you end up with the Spanish Inquisition.

Somewhere between these extremes lies Oral Roberts University. The place is just too damn weird to do any harm—if Elvis had built a church, it would probably look something like this place. The coming attraction at ORU's Mabee Center is *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, which somehow, like everything else in Tulsa, fits just perfectly.

Across the street at the Healing Outreach Center I saw an announcement for a sermon that read "Darwin is dead—Jesus is alive." It's as good an example as any of the sort of embrace of the irrational that lies at the heart and soul of both religion and rock'n'roll. Hell, yeah—"Springsteen is dead—Elvis is alive." Hell, yeah—it's just a matter of faith. Hell, yeah.

EASTPAK

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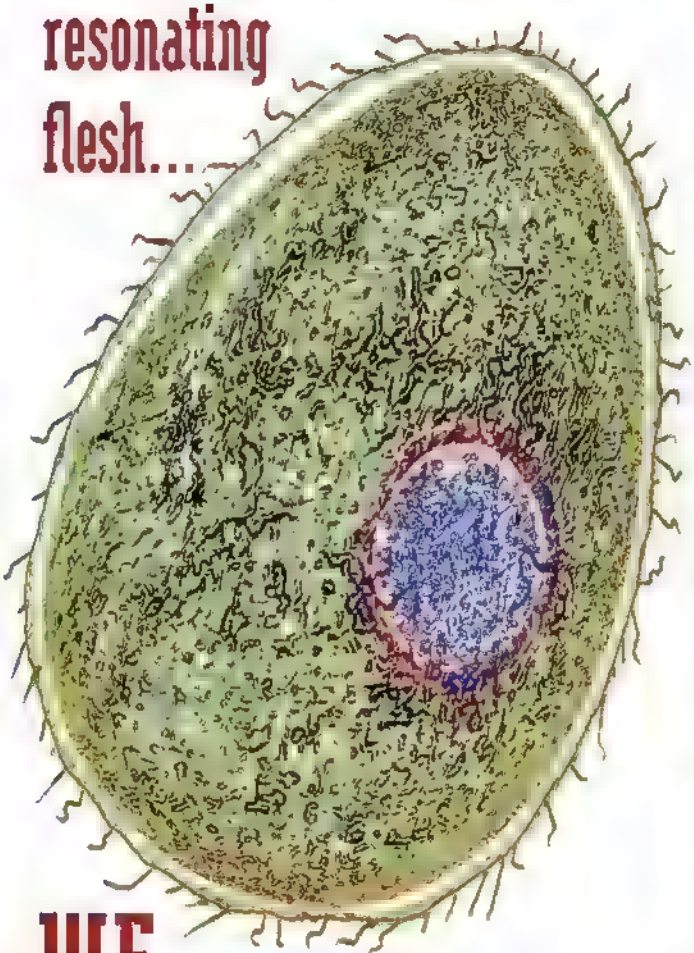
The musical musculature of ancient civilizations indicates that Homo sapiens were indeed little more than gelatinous lumps of resonating flesh...



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XTC
Rag & Bone Buffet

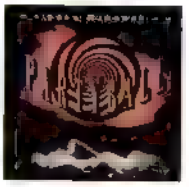
Twenty-four rare cuts and leftovers. B-sides, strange pseudonyms, flexi disc tracks, and other musical adventures. Nearly 80 minutes of rare listening including "Extrovert," "Too Many Cooks In The Kitchen," "Heaven Is Paved With Broken Glass," "Scissor Man," "Strange Tales, Strange Tails," "Cockpit Dance Mixture." On Geffen Compact Discs and Cassettes.

Siouxsie & The Banshees
Superstition

The new album from one of the most awe-inspiring, totally evolved bands of the last decade. A relentless, haunting, rhythmic, swirling, intoxicating, intense, and utterly compelling mystery is Superstition. On Geffen Compact Discs, Cassettes and Records. CD-5 and 12" Maxi Single with rare mixes of "Kiss Them For Me" also available. See them on the Lollapalooza tour this summer.

The Candy Skins
Space I'm In

Their Debut Album on DGC Compact Discs and Cassettes. "Fierce, barbed steel-tipped stone-sway guitars, hypnotic, drawled vocals and a ball-busting rhythm drive." (*Brumbeat*) Influenced by The Clash, The Byrds and The Rolling Stones. Fresh, melodic songwriting, frenetic live energy and already a major U.K. hit. Produced by Pat Collier of Wonderstuff and House Of Love fame.



Stan Ridgway
Partyball

The new album in the further musical travels of former Wall Of Voodoo lead singer Stan Ridgway. Still the unmistakable voice and vision behind some of the most original tunes ever put on record. Stan delivers the ultimate party platter - an uninhibited, quasi-absurd outer space opus featuring the hit "I Wanna Be A Boss." On Geffen Compact Discs and Cassettes.

Sonic Youth
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The complete, uncensored, track by track home video to Sonic Youth's No. 1 alternative album Goo. Eleven videos total, eight you've never seen anywhere before and won't see any other way, each the creation of a different director. Fifty-three minutes of solid Goo on Geffen Home Video and Pioneer Laser Disc. A heart full of dreams, a head full of Goo.

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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

anchorage, alaska

MARK BLACKWELL finds himself anchored down in Anchorage with nothing to go on but spit, rice cakes, and a moose.

I WAKE UP MY FIRST MORNING IN Anchorage, Alaska, sick, lonely, depressed, and jet-lagged from the 13-hour trip the night before, thinking, "Why the hell am I here?" Oh yeah. I remember. No matter how I feel, I'm determined to get out there and search for that ever elusive soul of rock'n'roll. No problem. Piece of cake. I just have to follow the clues.

Clue No. 1: Spit

Looking out the motel window I see a beat-up brown car, practically dragging the ground from the weight of the furniture and boxes haphazardly roped to its roof, idling in the parking lot across the street. ANCHORAGE OR BUST IN A STUDEBAKER is scrawled in huge black letters across the back window. This looks pretty rock'n'roll to me, so I rush outside. By the time I get downstairs, however, the car's gone. Something splatters on the pavement and I look up just in time to see two Eskimo girls trying to spit on me from a top-floor window of the motel. Maybe this isn't going to be so easy after all.

Clue No. 2: Rice Cakes

Back in the room I figure the best way to get started finding the soul of rock'n'roll anywhere is to check the yellow pages. Immediately one listing catches my eye: Mary Lou's Fun House/Mary Lou's House of Liquor and Fun Gifts. There must be rock'n'roll somewhere around there. So the quest begins.

Mary Lou's is apparently 20 miles southward, so I get to take a nice scenic drive. One thing that you can say about Alaska is that it's really beautiful. It's also cold, especially if you're too stupid to bring a coat. On the way out of town I'm delighted to see my first real rock'n'roll reference. Someone has spray painted VOIVOD all over an Alaska Railroad locomotive exhibit. Maybe I'm on the right track.

Nah. I see a lot of snow-capped mountains and a couple of eagles, but I can't find Mary Lou's. So I decide to head back to town and check out some record stores. The first one I come to has a For Sale sign in the window. The second one's turned into the Korean Rice Cake Company. No, this isn't so easy after all.

Clue No. 3: Moose

The next afternoon I find a record store that actually exists. By this time I've been around long enough to discover that the radio stations, clubs, and jukeboxes in town all pack a wallop of classic rock. It's as if they stopped sending records north after Van Halen's *1984*. So I'm happy to arrive at Mammoth Music, which has posters of Jesus Jones and Sisters of Mercy in its window. I ask co-owner Forest Jackson about the classic onslaught.

"Sometimes it seems that the Alaskan state band is Lynyrd Skynyrd," Jackson agrees. "But lately people are pushing for more new music."

Jackson points out that the local college radio station just got an FM license, and a new music club called the Underground has recently opened. After an enlightening conversation, however, I'm still no closer to my goal.

Cruising down the highway later I have to slam on brakes to avoid colliding with a moose. "Hey moose!" I shout out the window. "Is the soul of rock'n'roll anywhere around here?" Being a moose, and therefore not

able to reply to my question, he disappears into a reedy swamp next to the road. Perhaps he has understood and wants me to follow, but I opt not to.

Clue No. 4: Variety

Soon I catch a glimpse of the word *panties* in the corner of my eye. Looking in the rearview mirror I realize that I've stumbled upon Mary Lou's. MARY LOU'S: T-SHIRTS, PANTIES, HARDCORE ALASKAN GIFTS reads the sign.

"You in some kinda rock band or something?" queries the country-singerish lady, as I enter the small building.

"Something," I answer. The lady, who turns out to be Mary Lou Redmond herself, tells me that the last people to whom she asked that question turned out to be members of the Allman Brothers Band. In such good company, I take her question as a compliment, and explain my mission.

"How old do you have to be before you can sing?" Mary Lou asks.

"What?"

"My grandson is two now, and I'm planning on making him a singing star. His name is James Harvey Redmond. You better remember that name."

The cluttered place is empty this afternoon except for Mary Lou, one of her five sons, and Bill, Mary Lou's 90-year-old neighbor who's wearing a cap that reads WISCONSIN: LAND OF COW SHIT AND BEER FARTS. Mary Lou, who became a local hero in 1984 for outrunning a grizzly bear, ran her Fun House bar for 40 years before closing it in favor of the gift shop and liquor store. She's very proud to show me her jukebox, and happily plays some local music, including "The Coyote and I" by Hobo Jim. She also plays a song by Gary Stenulson, a singer from Montana who stopped by one day and then sent her his single "She Broke My Heart (And I Broke Her Jaw)." Mary Lou tells me that she thinks the soul of rock'n'roll is centered around stars like Elvis and Creedence Clearwater Revival. She says that now it just seems like something's missing.

"Looka that jukebox!" interjects Mary Lou's son. "That's variety for you! Some goddamn variety is what they need these days!"

Clue No. 5: Bird

"You ever seen our state bird?" asks

Top to bottom: The Birdhouse from outside, the Birdhouse from inside, the moose on the roadside, and the author on the cold side.

the bartender of the Birdhouse, one of the weirdest places I've ever set foot in. The walls and ceiling of this small rickety shack, standing since 1903, are covered with thousands of business cards, and more strangely, hundreds of autographed bras and panties. The bartender pulls out a tattered postcard with a picture of a ptarmigan bird on it. "We raise 'em here. You wanna see one?"

"Sure," I answer, as "Why Don't We Get Drunk and Screw" plays on the jukebox.

"Well this is their calling whistle," he says, producing an elaborate gold flute-like device. "Put your fingers over the holes and blow, and they'll usually come up to the window."

Turning toward the tiny floor-level window labeled "Fire Exit," I cover the holes and blow. A huge gust of white powder billows out of the "whistle" all over my face and into my hair.

"It's funny," says the bartender. "That whistle always seems to attract more turkeys than it does ptarmigans."

This ain't getting any easier.

Clue No. 6: Mars

Anchorage's KWHL Radio claims to be "Alaska's Home of Rock'n'Roll," so I figure I'd better give them a call. I've somehow avoided seeing any bands while in town, so the station's music director, Kimi Stevens, invites me to a show at the Underground.

"People underestimate the music scene here," Stevens says that night.

Mary Lou, who became a local hero in 1984 for outrunning a grizzly bear, is very proud to show me her jukebox, and plays some local music, including "The Coyote and I" by Hobo Jim.

"We're in Mars as far as the rest of the world is concerned."

The music director turns out to be the organizer of a series of local band contests, the most recent of which received entries from an impressive 33 groups, mostly metal, of which only "five or six" are what she refers to as "bad."

Tonight a band called Hyperthermia is playing. If you play at the Underground, you have to wait till all the customers are gone from a restaurant called the Beef and Sea, which the Underground is actually under. Hyperthermia does this, and then stalls as the power goes off three or four times, but finally kicks into gear. The band, surprisingly, is well worth the wait, thrashing out a tight, loud, frenzied, hair-let-down, ballsy, Metallica-like set. This is definitely rock'n'roll, so I'm pretty happy on this night. And if you're ever stranded around four in the morning somewhere outside Anchorage and you can't find your car, just call Hyperthermia guitarist Zallman Shedlock. He'll know where it is.

Clue No. 7: Heart

Browsing through the local section of a bookstore I find some stories by Tom Bodett, the guy who does all those cool Motel 6 radio ads. Motel 6 is pretty rock'n'roll, I guess. It turns out Bodett lives way down south in Homer, so I decide to pay him a visit. The next morning I find myself in his studio, luckily on a day that he's recording some commercials. After hearing Bodett say, "We'll leave the light on for you," about a hundred times, I talk to him about rock'n'roll.

"I used to be infatuated with blues players like Blind Blake, Lightnin' Hopkins, and Mississippi John Hurt," he says. "They'd sit around joints in New Orleans and listen to the piano players and then go play it on guitar. Jellyroll Morton—his stuff was rock'n'roll. Those were the guys that people like Chuck Berry listened to. The soul of rock is right there. Anything from the heart can be the soul of rock'n'roll."

Clue No. 8: Earth

Taking one last drive before splitting, I stop at a scenic point on the highway. I think about all the cool stuff that I've done and seen, way too much to write about, and I realize that you can pretty much find the soul of rock'n'roll in just about anything, anywhere, even someplace 3,569 miles from home.

I'm about to freeze, but I take a look at the little scenic display before I leave. And there it is on the sign in black and white: "The dramatic landscape with its rugged peaks, nearby active volcanoes, and frequent jarring earthquakes are continual reminders that in south central Alaska, rock'n'roll is here to stay."

Turns out to be pretty simple after all.

MARK BLACKWELL

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greenville, mississippi

Mister Danny Goes to Glendora

Cheap Charley's had three pool tables, a rock band called Frenzy, and a whole lot of young white people. When the band kicked into "Ain't That a Shame," most of the girls and a few of the guys got up to dance. A fat blond guy with a baseball cap reading HUGH EASLY WHOLESALE played his pool cue as a bass for the duration of the chorus, then proceeded to knock the ten ball in the corner pocket. I bought a Budweiser for a buck and a quarter.

JEFFERSON MORLEY finds soul salvation deep in Robert Johnson country.

When I looked up, a tall, heavyset white guy with red hair had taken over the microphone. He was rapping out Tone Lōc's "Wild Thing," which the band gave a nice crunching heavy-metal feel. Strawberry Ice (as I immedi-

Photographs by Jesse Frohman

Street playin' men The blues come to life during a sidewalk jam with Little Jeno (*near left*) and a friend

ately dubbed him) executed all the rhymes with wise-guy gusto and the dance floor was immediately packed, the crowd was having fun. Hell, once I dropped the cynical reporter pose, I was having fun. Sure, Strawberry Ice was just another white guy imitating blacks, but if that's not rock'n'roll there's no such thing.

I decided to head for Nelson Street, the heart of black Greenville. I was looking for Roosevelt "Booby" Barnes, a blues musician and local musical spokesman who owns a club there, the Playboy. When I got out of my car, a young man offered me some smoke; I said I was all set. At the grocery store next door, a guy said, "No telling when he'll be back." Back out on the street, a guy went by in a convertible and waved cheerfully, saying, "Yo, Mister Danny."

Back in my well-refrigerated motel room, I consulted the yellow pages. I started calling up nightclubs in the yellow pages, concentrating on the ones likely to have a black clientele. The Douglas Club on East Clay Street offered "Disco Drinks Dancing." I called up and someone named Carl listened to my curious assignment. He offered to show me around. "Come down about ten or eleven and things'll be hopping."

I spent the afternoon cruising the highways of the Delta. There wasn't much rock'n'roll on the radio. The local stations were devoted to Top 40, and after listening to the only classic rock station in the area, Z106 in Jackson, I could see why rock'n'roll isn't popular in the towns where it was born. "Call the CD Hotline," the Z106 DJ urged me, "and find out about how to get that new release from Yes."

"Carl," I thought, turning off the radio. "Here comes Mister Danny."

NEXT STOP: THE DOUGLAS CLUB. I parked on Highway 82 and walked up East Clay. It was about 11:00. The street was thick with people, all of them black, a few of them curious about the approaching white man. I walked up to a young guy and asked where I could find Carl, allegedly the club's owner. He said he didn't know no Carl. A fat guy came over and nodded at me and said he would go find him. He emerged from the Douglas Club a few minutes later with two plump ladies in tight-fitting shiny dresses. "Can I get a ride with you, baby?" he was saying. The answer was yes.

Still no Carl. I hung out outside the club with a dozen young black men. Since some of the fellows were getting pretty disgusted with my presence I ducked into the Douglas Club.

"*Bitch better give me my money / Bitch better give me my money.*" That was the rap refrain pumping on the sound system. The club wasn't crowded. Still no Carl, so I retreated to a country-western joint on Highway 82 called Studebakers and sat in the parking lot depressed. I felt like a fool for bouncing off that plate glass window, the color line, for believing that black people in Mississippi would want to have anything to do with this business called rock'n'roll. I felt like those rappers were speaking for the ghost of the blues men who never got Elvis's royalty checks: *Bitch better give me my money.*

Over the radio came a spot for a Mother's Day show at the T&T Lounge in Glendora, 8:00 P.M., Sunday night. The headline act was "Little Jeno, The Original Delta Bluesman," né Leroy Tucker. I couldn't find Glendora on my map but a couple of truck farmers at a fruit stand set me straight and I headed up Highway 61 late in the afternoon. I turned right on Highway 8 in Cleveland and passed through Dockery, where Robert Johnson grew up. The last light of day lit up the stratospheric pink clouds and a few minutes later a storm broke.

BY THE TIME I REACHED GLENdora, the rain had stopped. Glendora is a cluster of buildings alongside railroad tracks. On either side of the embankment are blacktop roads. One side features neat small homes; the other side features several abandoned buildings, the long narrow houses known as shotgun shacks, a new post office, two grocery stores, and the T&T Lounge. As I got out of my car, a freight train blasted by heading north, its whistle screaming.

Little Jeno said he learned to sing in the nearby cotton fields and made his first guitar out of two corncobs and some wire.

Outside of the T&T Lounge, the street was packed with cars. Inside, the room was completely dark except for a single red light over the stage and two Olde English "800" neon signs over the bar. Onstage, the Stone Gas Band was warming up the crowd with some high volume electrified blues. The audience consisted of maybe 20 people, few of whom were under 30, sitting around tables.

I ducked into the tiny dressing room backstage and found Little Jeno. He was a slight, sprightly man in a white suit. He said he learned to sing in the nearby cotton fields, made his first guitar out of two corncobs and some wire, and now had plenty of work playing the blues in Italy, Britain, and the United States. He explained that the Stone Gas Band was just a pickup band. His usual band in Jackson was too expensive for a date like this. Then Little Jeno excused himself and hit the stage.

It was the same rocking blues fare but Jeno and the band threw themselves into it. The sound system was primitive but the playing was sharp. A woman stood right in front of Jeno begging for a song called "It Ain't No Use." The woman kept saying it was her birthday and Mother's Day, too. Jeno asked how many kids she had. She said, "Thirteen." I think she was kidding. Jeno just shook her hand and launched into "It Ain't No Use." The song, a fun uptempo rocker, was first recorded by ZZ Hill, the Texas R&B singer whose name inspired ZZ Top. Little Jeno and the band romped while the mother of 13 did a solo dance consisting of only the subtlest pelvic adjustments.

The crowd and the room were heating up. The tables in front of the stage were cleared out and for a solid hour everybody was dancing to fast blues, slow blues, and in-between blues. A woman brought out an electric fan. The two ladies next to me, Mary and Minnie, asked me to dance. They introduced me to their friend Isaiah, a gray-haired gent in a maroon suit who was not to be outdone on the dance floor. I bought a bottle of Boone's Farm for two bucks. Mary and Minnie, already lovely in their white Mother's Day dresses, got lovelier. Little Jeno took a break, came back in an all-black outfit and rocked some more.

After the show, we went down the highway to an after- hours joint in a mobile home called Minnie's. "It's not really my place," Minnie told me. "They just named it after me." We drank beer, ate pork chops and white bread out of a Styrofoam box, and wound up talking in the parking lot. There was Minnie and Mary and another woman, and a couple of other guys. They told me that 11 houses in Glendora were flooded, that there was work around there if you wanted it, that the people up in the hills (they pointed east) were slightly crazy. I told them some of my adventures on the color line. They attributed this to the craziness of the big city. A guy named Deion, sitting on the hood of a car under a starless Mississippi sky, said, "Out here it's just people."

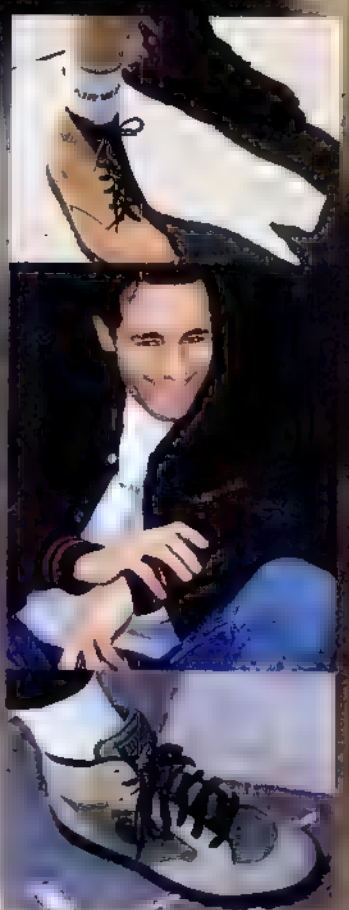
That dream, that hope, that illusion, that lie—take your pick—is the heart and soul of rock'n'roll. Mister Danny had found what he was sent to find. He drove 50 miles back to his motel, drunk and content, arriving just before the dawn.

AIRWALK

SHOES

CLOTHING

ACCESSORIES



Can you see the soul of rock'n'roll? Is the heart of rock'n'roll worn on its sleeve, or does its elusive spirit come from within? Get the picture?

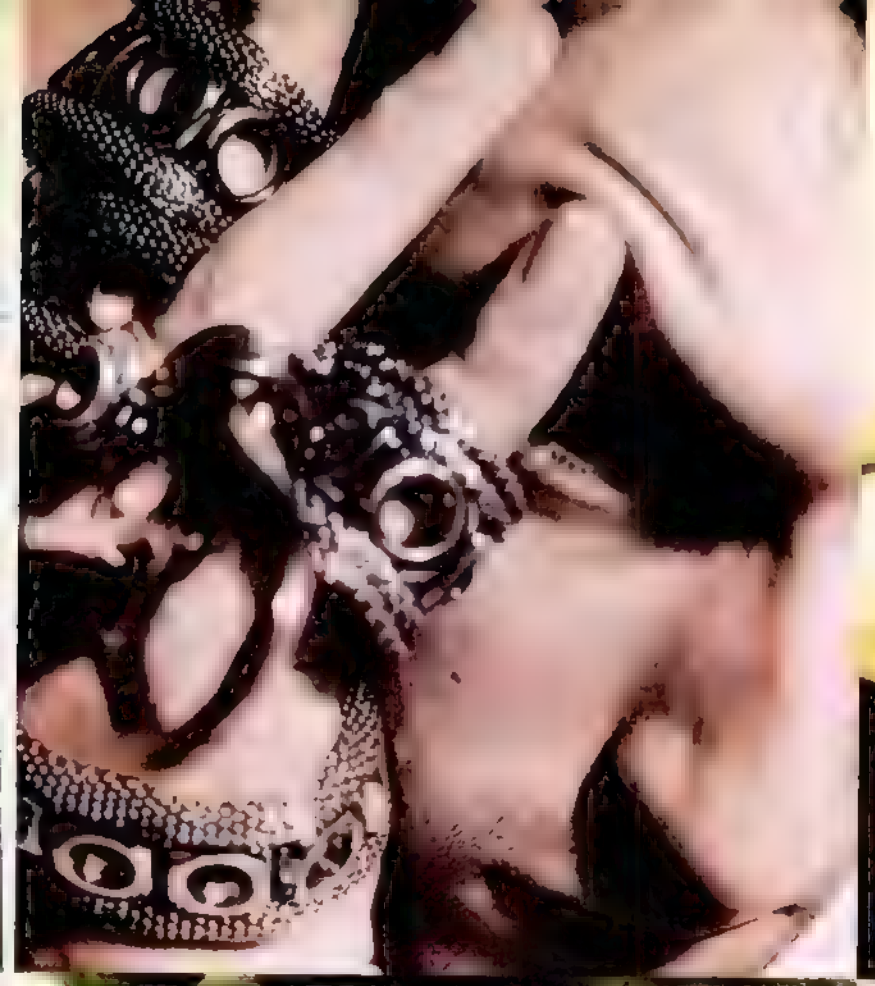
Soul Searching

Soul is the most intense, purest, raw human emotion. Guts, heart, and soul, slicing through. Soul is liberation—a yearning to be free. Soul is real feelings: deprivation, angst, pleasure, pain, positivity, negativity . . . love! Though stereotyped as "black music," soul has no color.

I think James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Perry Farrell, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Iggy Pop, early David Bowie, John Lennon, Marc Bolan, Sinéad O'Connor, Bob Dylan, Darlene Love, Eric Burdon, Mick Jagger, the Four Tops, Brian Wilson, Righteous Brothers, Lemmy Kilmister, Marvin Gaye, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Skeeter Davis, Lou Reed, and Tina Turner have all got it. And of course, me.

—Joey Ramone

Photographs by Gerhard Jurkovic



The essence of rock'n'roll is rebellion. This is obvious from the examples of Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Eddie Cochran, etc. Also, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Sex Pistols, the Damned, and Motörhead. The only reason for rock'n'roll to exist is to be the soundtrack for the movie of teenage angst and anger. And it serves you right.

I think the personification of rock'n'roll is individual to whomever you put the question. Mine is Little Richard. The ultimate rags-to-riches tale: conquering all the barriers with the quintessential rock'n'roll vocal.

—Lemmy, Motörhead

Models' clothing credits on page 65.

The soul of rock'n'roll is a hard-on. That's where it starts. It's a hard-on that goes to the heart. Something that has to turn you on emotionally and sexually, it's got to work on all levels.

Rock'n'roll was a happy accident. But the kids of that generation made it keep going, and now they're our parents, and you know, we kept it going. The selling out of rock'n'roll really began in the mid-'70s. But these days image is everything. You got a tennis player saying it on television. Image is everything. And that message has been sent to every kid and every rock band in the world. I mean that's why there are so many heavy metal bands that all look alike. You know, it's like a kid can walk into a store nowadays and say, "I want this haircut, this guitar, this set of clothes, and so therefore I equal that." It's a math problem.

I think the greatest songwriter is Bob Dylan, for folk and rock. Smokey Robinson is absolutely the greatest pop-soul writer ever to live, just millions of songs Smokey Robinson wrote. The best rock singer ever would have to be Paul Rodgers.

—John Mellencamp

Page 61: Clockwise from top left, Model rock dude clutching a silver long bolt by Harley-Davidson; rock dudette showing off in a corset bra top by Dolce & Gabbana and black pumps by Robert Clergerie; rapping in style with tank top by Nike and leather shearling coat by Dolce & Gabbana; model guitarist jamming in fitted waistcoat by Dolce & Gabbana, black jeans by Levi-Strauss, Chelsea boots by Paul Smith and sunglasses by Ray-Ban. *Page 62:* High-kicking guitar god wearing fitted waistcoat by Dolce & Gabbana, slim-legged black pants and Chelsea boots by Paul Smith. *Page 63:* Bad boy poseur sporting a tank top by Fruit of the Loom; leather motorcycle pants and black engineer boots by Harley-Davidson. Silver rings from Trash and Vaudeville, NYC. *Page 64:* Model sexpot clad only in Levi-Strauss jeans available at Classics, zip front sweater by Bella Freud. Rings available from Trash and Vaudeville, NYC.

Edited by Lauren Spencer, styled by Beverly Hyde, hair and makeup by Sara Johnson.

BAD LANDS

Sharing some wide open spaces with RICHARD HELL.

Jnesday,
Rapid
ll Welcome.
FROGS & PRINCESSt
Landmark Lounge -- Fri.
6th St Deli -- Sat. about N
Elev ules: no smilin
Col. y Mustard, XYz
tion Blacksmith
F e girls are waitin
to 24 hours, 1-900-
990 0 $1/minute, 14
mi dei only.
GIRLS do you like to rock 'n' roll? I come from NYC to talk to you 348 8300 ext. 2502.
IN town from NYC doing rock and roll research. Help me. Interested girls call 348-8300 ext. 2502
IVE TIC GIRLS
Wan to you now.
24 hr 90 002?
.25/ n./15 n
girl

Looking for fun in all the right places.

THE PLANE DRIFTED DOWN ACROSS PATCHES OF dandelions toward the modern little airport outside Rapid City. I had five days to find some rock'n'roll down there, or, rather, "the soul of rock'n'roll."

It took me five days to even remember where I was. I kept saying, "Grand Rapids." What difference did it make anyway? The Hilton was like any Hilton, the Hardee's like all other Hardee's. In the *Rapid City Journal* the main source of news was the weather (front-page headline the day of my arrival:

"THUNDERSTORMS RUMBLE INTO S.D.").

The fact is, a person would have a hard time finding the soul of rock'n'roll even if he had Elvis Presley strapped to a chair in his living room, dosed with truth serum. Is it in some roadside juke joint? Saturday morning TV? Out in the desert on a blanket? Inside a condom? Messed up in a hairdo someplace? Does the phrase have any meaning at all?

This rich guy with a magazine is putting me through mental contortions, paying me a K or two to watch me squirm. I hate him, but I have a secret weapon. The secret weapon is, *I am rock'n'roll.*

I LIKED RAPID CITY (POPULATION 65,000). I didn't want to leave. It reminded me of my childhood, completely boring and fascinating. It occurred to me that maybe I wasn't even there, that really I was 14 years old, daydreaming I was grown-up and that someone was paying me to drift through town looking for "the soul of rock'n'roll." I liked that dream.

I spent the first couple of days sizing the place up. Just casually getting the feel of it: window-shopping, eavesdropping, barhopping (sharecropping, flip-flopping). I swear the euphoria never relented. There's nothing like being a stranger with a few cents in your pocket. Every time I agree to go someplace to look for a story I have the hardest time getting past that. It feels completely magic.

Actually, the two most poetic moments of the trip happened when I was alone in my hotel room. One, when I was sitting up in bed with an icy glass of scotch (bottled r'n'r) beside me on the night table, and the cassette player rolled on with Van Morrison's new album, my notebooks and papers spread out around me, and I caught this glimpse of my head in the corner of the mirror opposite the bed. There I was but I couldn't see myself; my eyes didn't show. I'd caught myself unawares. I was spying on myself. And the other time I was also lying in bed, looking out the wall-to-wall window crammed with sky. And I was feeling pretty comfortable, without too much to do, and the big bank of clouds up there looked so inviting, and I thought, "What I'd really like to do right now is fly straight up into that little clump of clouds right there in the middle." Like I was shot out of a sling or had a jet pack on my back. Then I thought, "If I had a million dollars I could do that." Then I thought, "That's rock'n'roll." How else could I get a million dollars?

By day three I was already instinctively uncomfortable in my own wardrobe and found myself helplessly eyeing the ads in the paper for flannels, boots, and cowboy hats. I really wanted another two or three years of hair, a pickup truck, and a farm dog beside me in the cab. I was getting more and more seduced. I resisted it because I knew I couldn't really qualify as a

Nothing Beats A Bud.
THE WORLD RENOWNED
Budweiser
KING
BEER
Brewed by an original pro
Choicest Hops, Rice and B
Anheuser-Busch, Inc
Budweiser

the soul of rock'n'roll?

continued from page 48

David Thomas, Pere Ubu

To pioneer; to open up the new land. To build the brave new world. To be a true believer. To understand that here is the vehicle suited to the poetry and language of the human experience. To want these things is the soul of rock'n'roll. And like so much that is essentially American, it is powerfully naive, a noble vision tragically flawed and doomed.

Brian Wilson embodies that soul.

Alice Cooper

Elvis Presley's blue suede shoes are the soul and whoever can fill those shoes embodies it.

Mike Edwards, Jesus Jones

The soul of rock'n'roll embraces the present, sees only a glorious future, and has little memory of the past. It is carefree, feels invincible—that it can conquer or save the world—and doesn't answer to anyone. It screams with unbridled excitement, lives only for fun and the enjoyment of the moment. Its enormous energy keeps it restless and constantly inquiring after new experiences and ideas, which it seizes joyfully and swiftly only to have it drop with almost instant disinterest. It sees the world revolving around it and the world often obliges. It is shamelessly, unconsciously wasteful and celebrates excess.

Kim Thayil, Soundgarden

Rock'n'roll doesn't have a soul, only a dick and a wallet. And the person who embodies the aforementioned? I'd say Val Kilmer.

continued on page 63

cowboy, plus I thought my New York identity would be an advantage soon.

This was because I'd had a brainstorm.

While scanning the pickups-for-sale listings in the *Journal* classifieds I'd noticed the personals. There weren't many of them; basically a Christian video-dating service and three or four phone-sex ads. But I had a vision. This is what I foresaw:

GIRLS—Do you like to rock'n' roll? I came from NYC to talk to you. 348-8300, ext. 2502.

Along with:

In town from NYC doing rock'n' roll research. Help me! Interested girls call 348-8300, ext. 2502.

I laughed out loud at the beauty of it. Where really is the soul of rock'n' roll but in the quivering space between two teenage bodies that are dying to make love but are scared to death?

Immediately I went down to the newspaper offices and placed my ads.

That left me free to pursue the side of rock'n'roll especially favored by Elvis and Jim Morrison: sugar. I figured that in Rapid City I'd be much more likely to find a good cherry pie than a good rock'n'roll band, and I was more interested in the pie anyway. As it turned out the pie I found was a lot like the rock'n'roll I found: incredibly ugly but well-suited to its purpose. I had to settle for strawberry. It was so good. It was in this all-American–type, salad-barred, ice-cold, family restaurant where most of the patrons seemed to know each other. I ordered the special, $4.95. For that I got this big fresh crunchy salad, baked potato with sour cream, hot rolls, separate Ping-Pong balls of butter for every food item, and a T-bone so huge it hung off the edges of its ranch-size platter. You could definitely dance to it. (What's more, you could dance on it.) This was living. And then the pie. As I said, it was homely. It wasn't neat; it was sloppy, and it looked unreal. As a matter of fact it was Day-Glo, a kind of phosphorescent red that was a little frightening, and the ice cream had an unhealthy kind of ivory cast to it that wasn't promising either. Plus the berries themselves were so massive, you could only imagine them growing in a laboratory. But the flavor—I actually found myself moaning with pleasure.

I did go to both of the local music venues, located a couple of blocks from each other in the middle of town. One was a wide, low, and dim country-western bar called Boot Hill, and the other, the Rush, a rock'n'roll club. I went early to the cowboy club, pre-soundcheck, and had a couple of beers as I watched a short chorus line of dancers—jeans, boots, cowboy hats—practicing a country step in unison to this twangy record. The girls looked like they were really having fun, the men seemed capable but looked more determined and dignified. I couldn't take my eyes off this one girl, who I couldn't even see very well, as I watched her dance. The power of a T-shirt draped over the swelling back end of a tight pair of jeans on a girl who's otherwise skinny is a truly astonishing thing. It's like uranium, some kind of limitless generator. Sometimes it seems unbearable.

While scanning the pickups-for-sale listings in the *Journal* classifieds I'd noticed the personals. I had a vision. This is what I foresaw: *GIRLS– Do you like to rock'n'roll? I came from NYC to talk to you. 348-8300, ext. 2502.*

At the Rush the main subject was also lust. Everybody just wanted to know who they might be kissing. There's no getting around rock'n' roll being a variety of foreplay (but then, what isn't?). It was dark and cozy, like a little cup, with a stage at the bottom fronting on a dance floor and a bar opposite and above it. Twice as many men as women. The guys mostly raw-looking long-hairs, the girls trailer-park goddesses. The band for the night was a kind of frat-house garage three-piece from Kansas called the Wild Ones that played the reliables, from "You Really Got Me" and "Time Is on My Side" to "Too Hot to Handle" and "I Wanna Be Sedated," sometimes with their own little lyrical embellishments, like a repeated refrain of "Fucking bullshit!" during "Bony Moronie." They sounded fine, though the lead singer had a bowl haircut, was barefoot, and wore Bermuda shorts.

By the time my ads appeared I had only one day left in town. I woke up excited. As it worked out, I got three phone calls and saw two girls, one of whom brought her boyfriend. It was exquisite. The tension on the phone, and in the room when I had my visitor, was intense and potent, churning out adrenalin and a sharp clarity that was a true thrill. What was going on? Who was this girl who had responded to my ad and knocked on the door to my hotel room, and furthermore, who the fuck was I? I knew I was doing something sleazy, then again I didn't misrepresent myself, but beyond that, of course, I held all the cards, and the difference in sophistication levels inevitably made me a villain. I felt a little bit like Satan, or at least a Jim Thompson character. She was 17, overweight, wearing thick glasses, worked at Hardee's, and planned to start beauty school soon. I described my assignment and grilled her about the social ways of the local youth. I got a lot of information, but nothing remarkable—there were the same kinds of generational conflicts and mating habits given to music here as in all other similar American places. Of course the real question was what kind of move I was going to make toward her. There was no question that she'd come for the adventure.

Finally, I simply thanked her and showed her to the door. I just wasn't feeling cold enough to push the thing to its limit. I was tempted to at least ask her something outrageous to test what she might be capable of, and I actually ended up feeling a little veneer of guilt for not having backed up the secret promise of my printed come-on, but I'd gotten enough cheap thrills just watching us, so I sent her on her way. The break in her impeccable composure that occurred at the moment I was indicating it was time for her to leave was moving. She had stood up, clearly a little surprised, and she just said, "Now I don't know what to say," and I felt terrible for an instant, and then I said goodbye.

CHAPTERHOUSE

Whirlpool

"★★★★ There's both beauty and strength here," says Peter Kane of Q magazine. "WHIRLPOOL," featuring "PEARL" and "FALLING DOWN."

On The Dedicated-RCA Records Label -cassettes and compact discs.

The RCA Records Label—It All Adds Up To One.

dedicated

DANNY CLINCH

i fought the LAW

"Slick" Rick Walters had it all: a hit album, lots of gold, and some guns. Then he took one of those guns and shot his cousin. Now he's in jail. BOB MACK reports on this sad and fascinating tale.

AT 5:28 P.M. ON TUESDAY, JULY 3, 1990, officers Rodriguez and Wong of the 47th Precinct in the Bronx got the call. "*MB shots . . . six rounds . . . in black Toyota Camry . . . possibly fled on Parkway . . . 241 and White near OTB.*" A black male (MB) had fired six rounds at East 241st Street and White Plains Road, near the Off-Track Betting outlet, before fleeing in a Toyota toward the Bronx River Parkway.

It wasn't a Toyota, but otherwise the radio alert matched the testimony given later by the gunman, one Ricky Walters, following his arrest. "I was driving a rent-a-car Dodge Shadow at East 241st Street and White Plains Road when I saw my cousin Mark," Walters told the cops. "I drove home with my girlfriend, Lisa Santiago, and picked up six weapons: two .25-caliber automatic pistols, one .380, two Uzis, and one shotgun. I drove back to East 241st and White Plains, saw my cousin Mark, and shot at him about five times with my .380. . . . I left the scene westbound on 241st Street and got on the Bronx River Parkway going south. The police were chasing me. I tried to get off at the Allerton Avenue exit, couldn't make the turn, and crashed."

Walters's testimony omits some salient points: that the corner where the shooting took place was a known drug-dealing location, where neither victim—Walters's cousin, Mark Plummer, nor bystander Wilbert Henry—felt out of place (both were scheduled for sentencing this summer: Henry for intended sale of drugs, Plummer for drug and illegal-handgun possession). Nor does his deadpan account of the chase mention his James Brown–like weaving in and out of holiday traffic at 80 miles per hour, nor that he and his six-months pregnant girlfriend both broke a leg in the crash, nor, according to an officer at the scene, that Rick resisted arrest even as he was pried from the wreckage. Finally, he and Lisa had never gone home to get the guns, because they were in the car all along.

There was something else missing from the testimony. This guy Walters was not your typical gangster. In fact, he was a rap star who called himself "Slick Rick," and had scored a hit album in 1988, *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick*, which sold 1.2 million copies. One song, "Children's Story," had even described an incident ominously similar to the not-so-great adventure Rick had just been in: "He raced up the block doing 83 / Crashed into a tree near University / Ran out of bullets and he still got static / Grabbed a pregnant lady and pulled out the automatic / Sirens sounded and he seemed astounded / Before long the boy got surrounded. . . . Talk about the Bronx, Rick."

Lots of rappers *talked* about the Bronx or Compton, but few lived it. Then again, lots of nonrappers *did* live it. And though "Children's Story" was somewhat prophetic, cops and rap insiders, especially Ricky's former publicist Bill Adler, maintain that what happened to Ricky Walters wasn't that unique for the Bronx. Regardless, Rick had been none too slick this time. Now he himself sat surrounded, facing a slew of charges including attempted murder. His trip through the Bronx legal system was about to begin—as were the analogies to *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Except this time it was Slick Rick, the Young Black Rapper, not Sherman McCoy, the Great White Defendant, who'd get stuck in jail with an outlandish $800,000 bail. Come to think of it, the assistant D.A.'s request for higher bail gets shot down in *Bonfire*. This, however, was real life—not some novel.

And the only thing missing was an ambulance chaser sent by Hollywood superagent Mike Ovitz to secure movie rights.

The betting shop on East 241st Street and White Plains Road, the corner where Rick's fortunes took a turn for the worse.

Sure, a lot of rappers talked about the Bronx and Compton, but few lived it.

AS UNLIKELY A GANGster as Ricky Walters was, it's not as if the shooting of his cousin didn't make some kind of sense. For one thing, his life had been sprinkled with incidental tragedy and casual violence almost since the day he was born to Jamaican parents in London, England, on January 14, 1965.

While still only 18 months old, Ricky got into a fight with a girl, during which some accidentally broken glass blinded his right eye. Several unsuccessful operations on his eye followed. Even so, growing up in South Wimbledon with his parents, Melton and Veronica, and his older sister, Caron, Ricky says dreamily that life "was more peaceful and slower" than in America. At school his athletic abilities extended only to "marbles," but he was talented in other ways and indulged a knack for drawing; unlike most kids, though, he didn't draw cartoons or graffiti but preferred "more real-life stuff."

When Ricky was 12 his family moved to the United States and settled, ironically enough, at East 241st Street and White Plains Road in the Bronx. Kids teased him at first for his accent, and a wardrobe that was "nerdish—you know, cheap sneakers, funny colors, goofy clothes." In time, however, he made friends with guys like his future DJ, Vance Wright, and eventually entered the La Guardia High School of Music and Arts.

Dana McCleese, now the rapper Dana Dane, was Ricky's best friend in high school. "We could have both been B students if we went to class more," says Dana, "but we used to go to a park with three other guys and make up rap routines."

Musically, Ricky was already introducing McCleese to the power of storytelling as opposed to just boasting. In turn, Dana, a tough Brooklyn boy, was fascinated by Rick's British accent and encouraged him to take advantage of it. As far as apparel went, says Dana, "We were just like twins. We had the same color Kangols, matching shoes and pants, same coat—the whole thing." Enthralled schoolgirls often confused these Bobsey twins, who were so attached to pith helmet–style Kangol hats that Rick, Dana, and their three sidekicks became known as the Kangol Crew. Though they never cut a record, Dana insists that the crew were "legends before we even left the school."

After school they'd play, among other things, the numbers, as Dana explains: "We was young and not working, so we'd try to make money to buy some new Pumas—'cause we always had to have new gear on at school." Ah yes, the gear. . . . "Even back then Ricky had little gold chains and rings," recalls Dana. "He got his Cazals first, and everybody wanted to rob you for them." Cazals were the gold-plated, nonprescription eyeglasses which attracted national attention in the early '80s when inner-city youths started killing over them. Dana says he and Ricky often got hassled, "but we knew how to get out of things—never get blocked in, keep with the posse, and don't get separated or they might try and rush you."

Though such violence was not unusual, Rick and Dana were hardly gangster material. "Guys used to bring guns to school and me and Ricky would be like, 'Yo, that kid's got a gun—that's dope!' At the same time, we was like, 'Yo, we ain't messin' with that.' "

AFTER GRADUATION, RICKY REUNITED WITH Vance Wright, who also grew up near East 241st and White Plains. "We used to chill and hang out," Rick says today, again with just a glint of nostalgia in his eye. "He had equipment in his basement. We'd drink beer and play pool. He liked the way I was rapping—and I liked the way he was cutting."

The duo began entering rap contests which usually ended in fights, while the prize money, sometimes as much as $1,000 ("Chump change now, but it was a lot back then," says Vance), never got awarded. Vance soured on the scene and went to college, but it was at one of these bogus contests that Ricky caught the eye of Doug E. Fresh, a Barbados-born, Harlem-bred rapper already established as the "Original Human Beat Box."

The result of their partnership, a 1985 single called "La-Di-Da-Di," the B side of "The Show," is a piece of hip hop history. With only Doug E.'s face farts as a backing track, MC Ricky D (as he was known then) jokes, sings, cries, and weaves a refreshingly melodic rap about his elaborate toilet in a Sybil-like array of voices: after taking a bubble bath, doing his nails, squeezing the Johnson's Baby Powder, splashing on Polo cologne, and donning Gucci briefs, he hits the streets and breaks the heart of a woman twice his age. If Barry Manilow were reincarnated as a rapper, this is probably what he'd sound like.

Over five hundred thousand copies later, and with a Madison Square Garden show under their belts, these two were not only pioneers—they were stars. The only hitch was that Doug E. wouldn't pay Ricky his fair share, or at least that's what Ricky said at the time. Nowadays Ricky puts their breakup down to a clash of ideas; either way, it was too bad, because another of their songs, "Treat Her Like a Prostitute," was fast becoming an underground favorite. It would have to stay that way for three years.

THERE IS A LOT OF SPECULATION BUT LITTLE FACT as to what happened in the three years between "La-Di-Da-Di," and the release of Ricky's debut album on Def Jam. Only one thing is certain: Rick's image as an eccentric mushroomed. Some said he'd been on the pipe and was now in rehab. Or that he'd been stabbed while he was in Harlem with Doug E. That he'd smoked some bad dust. That someone had spiked his drink. The most persistent story of all was that Def Jam president Russell Simmons had him sprung from a mental hospital to make the LP.

"That's not true," Simmons snorts, adding, "I didn't fuck with him." (At least one rap insider, nevertheless, still insists otherwise.) Ricky himself denies the rumors, saying that he just didn't want

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MACY'S CHESS KING BULLOCK'S JAY JACOBS

BLOOMINGDALE'S DAYTON HUDSON ROBINSON'S DILLARDS

to put out anything "wack" and that it took a while to get right. Whatever the case, once he started working on his first album, the recording sessions were, as they say, stormy. "He fired everybody," Simmons says. "Rick Rubin, Sam Sever, me! I was the first one! We made something, and it was dope. . . . He hated it."

Only Public Enemy producer Hank Shocklee was able to work with the stubborn rapper. Ricky told me he got along with Shocklee, but he told another reporter Hank was "useless" to him. For his part, Shocklee gives a familiar take on Ricky: "He's a genius, almost a Hendrix personality."

Indeed, *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* had the stuff of genius. "Treat Her Like a Prostitute" predated 2 Live Crew's overt sexism; "Children's Story" anticipated Ice Cube's gangster tales. Ricky's rapid-fire clarity inspired Young M.C., while his schizophrenic breaks into Diana Ross oldies and the *Davy Crockett* TV theme created an unpredictable character who paved the way for every calculated caricature since, from Kwame the Boy Genius to Humpty Hump.

Fans responded accordingly, the album went platinum, and now that he was a star, Ricky wanted to look like one. "After selling a couple hundred thousand records," says Russell Simmons, "an artist will come in and ask for a car and some gold. We always say, Why don't you buy a stage set?" Ricky took the cars—specifically a red Mercedes sports coupe and red Nissan Pathfinder. He also took the gold, eventually $60,000 worth, mostly in the form of thick rope necklaces.

So while Afrocentrics rediscovered the dashiki, and would-be gangsters cocked their Raiders caps, Ricky stood out—neither old school nor new school, but a little of both. The gold was B-boy, but he wore no sneakers or sports gear. The suede Bally Aden shoes, cardigan sweaters, suits and fur-collared charcoal trench coat were distinguished like De La Soul, but more yuppie than hippie. With his eye patch, he looked quite the star. Soon he'd be acting like one as well.

RICK AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POPULARITY WAS A piece of work. His nickname was "The Ruler"; his favorite phrase was "I'll crush you." He called people "crumbs," and he'd do things like purposely barge into you at clubs. Onstage he'd dis everybody from his dancers to Russell Simmons. Reportedly, he "didn't have a lot of friends among rappers." (When I saw Rick with Chuck D recently, they hugged—but they were like two society matrons. Even Chuck, the loudmouth clad in sweat shorts and Bulls jersey, was disarmed by the distant dandy.)

Apparently, Rick would fly around town in a Mercedes littered with the bottles of Möet champagne that he guzzled like most rappers quaff "40s"; according to one observer, he was literally cruisin' for a bruisin'. Predictably, the tailspin only enhanced his reputation and increased his draw. The teen 'zine *Rap Masters* giggled that "Slick Rick's antics on- and offstage made the year amusing." They also ran a "Win Dinner With Slick Rick Contest," which, due to unexpected events, nobody ever won.

Rick at the height of his popularity was a piece of work. His nickname was "The Ruler," and his favorite phrase was "I'll crush you."

IT WAS HIS MOTHER, VERONICA, who suggested that Ricky hire his cousin Mark as a security guard for the summer '89 tour with L.L. Cool J, Big Daddy Kane, and others. Veronica was Ricky's tour manager, and noticed that Mark appeared to be making even more money than Ricky—though at what it wasn't quite clear. Nevertheless, he was to provide muscle so Ricky wouldn't have to carry a gun—something which Ricky, by now, was doing in the "hectic" wake of his first album. Ironically, security on that tour may have lapsed when Ricky and Kane (who were friends) had a reported run-in; Ricky allegedly pulled a gun on Kane backstage, but today he says it was merely a verbal dispute over billing order.

Meanwhile, Ricky says Mark was receiving $500 a week and wanted more. Rick claims he gave Mark $3,000, a van, and told him to chill until his new album came out. (Most of Rick's *Adventures* royalties were by now tied up in real estate.) Ricky further alleges that Mark, not satisfied, pressured Veronica into giving him some cash. Mark busted Ricky's chops in other ways. He wouldn't register the van in his own name, and it accumulated tickets in Rick's name. Ultimately, says Rick, "He played like he had nothing against me, and then he'd have one of his friends rob me."

Which is how Rick describes the events of April 20 last year, when his Pathfinder was shot through with at least 20 bullets outside the Castle, a rough Bronx club where rappers go to see and be seen. "I'm not sure," says Rick about the attack in which he was grazed in the back while two friends escaped with no serious injuries. "It happened so fast. But it was him and his people."

Mark then allegedly resumed his "extortion." "This is what people like him do for a living," says Rick, "they rob drug dealers—big-time dealers."

Rick related what happened next during his July 3 testimony to the cops. "About one month ago . . . I was walking toward the front door of my house when an unidentified black male ran up to me with a gun in his hand. I was able to get into my apartment first. This guy started kicking my front door; I fired one shot through the door to scare him. This male left and about thirty seconds later, I heard a male voice—it sounded like my stepfather's voice. He said, 'Ricky, open the door.' "

According to the police report, it was actually Mark impersonating his stepfather's voice. Ricky didn't fall for the ruse, so Mark left and a few minutes later allegedly called Ricky and threatened to kill him. The next day Mark told Ricky in person he was was going to kill both Ricky *and* his mother. Apparently that did it. As Ricky says, "Mess with a nigga's moms, and . . ."

Rick explains what he did next on the grounds of Mark's street reputation: "He's murdered people but he's never been caught." (Detectives from the 47th Precinct state that Mark Plummer is not and has never been a murder suspect.)

According to Ricky, it was about a month later during the early evening of July 3 when he drove by the corner of White Plains and 241st. In "Children's Story" the "Kid starts to figure / I'll do years if I pull this trigger," but Ricky slowed down the car and took aim.

Rick, in the days of living large, shares a joke with some close friends. *Above*, Slick Rick and his DJ Vance.

AFTER THE CRASH RICKY WAS TAKEN TO THE Bronx Municipal Hospital, where he stayed under round-the-clock security for a couple of weeks. Arraigned on July 12, he was sent to Manhattan Detention Complex, and he cooled his heels there from July 16 until February 28 while waiting for the $800,000 bail to be posted. Respectful of his celebrity and sympathetic to the severity of his bail, the inmates left him alone, giving Ricky time to rhyme. Says Vance, "He'd be calling me, telling me to get this and that beat. I'd call him back and play it, and he'd kick it in his head to make sure they were flowin'. That's how we did a lot of the new album."

Productive as he was, Ricky still faced two counts of attempted murder, two for assault, and six illegal-weapons charges. But basically it came

RICKY POWELL

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down to this: The minimum in New York State for attempted murder is two to six years, the max is eight and a third to twenty-five. According to Peter Gersten, one of Ricky's lawyers, Judge Gerald Sheindlin "made us an offer we couldn't refuse." In return for pleading guilty, Ricky was guaranteed no more than three and a third to ten—minus the eight months time already served.

Eventually Def Jam posted bail, and after pleading guilty on March 22, Ricky was given until June 6 to do some recording. Then, flanked by bodyguards and holed up in top-secret locations like Manhattan's Chung King Recording Studios, Ricky quickly completed two albums and five videos. The material, though not stunning, is still uniquely Ricky, a mixture of melody and melancholy. "Aw, Rick's sad again," the beginning of one song warns; "I'm feeling sad and blue," the chorus of the first single, "Shouldn't Have Done That," croons.

This time Rick and Vance produced the material themselves. When outside producers like Prince Paul and Marley Marl contributed, there was no static. Rick's newfound amiability prompts Russell Simmons to claim that Rick "is already rehabilitated." Rick hasn't been seen drinking, he's closer to his family, and he's intent on staying with his girlfriend Lisa, who gave birth to their son, Rick, just over a year ago. Rick, Sr., is even playing the good father, having already "trucked" the toddler with gold chains. But while little Rick's dad insists that "no one should go to jail for protecting their legally earned property," and that he's "a good guy who got fucked," he had fought the law. And as usual, the law won.

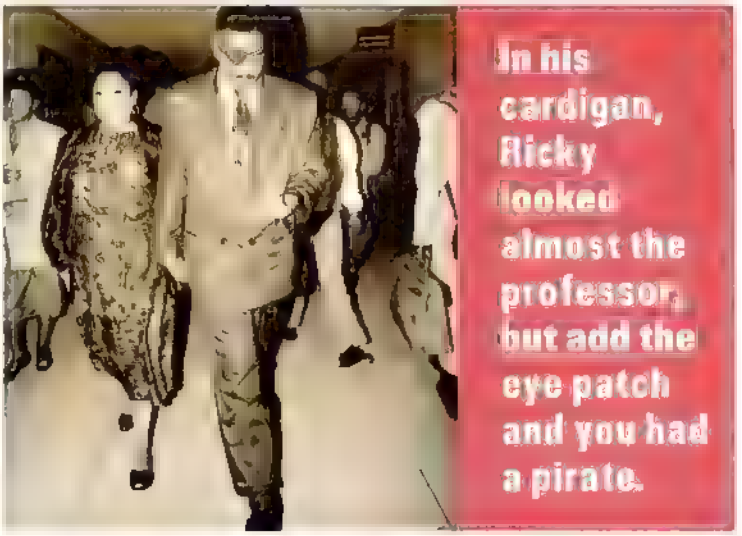
At the sentencing on June 6, another of Rick's lawyers, James Gagliardi, lambasted the district attorney for being "unfair" and "inflexible." He compared Rick, who stood with head bowed, to boxer Jack Johnson and pointed to some volunteer work he'd done for the Department of Public Safety. Judge Sheindlin appreciated Rick's contrition but noted that "people look up to you and they have to know that if you do wrong things, terrible things will happen to you." With that, he sentenced Rick, as promised, to three and a third to ten years. Rick was cuffed and, in his purple suit and blue Ballys, led away. At the last moment he looked back at his family and friends. Outside the courtroom his mother Veronica finally broke down. As you read this, his new album, *The Ruler's Back*, should be in the stores, and Rick should be in an upstate prison.

SO WHAT'S THE REAL DEAL? IS RICKY WALTERS, as he says, a good guy threatened by a thug cousin? Or is there something else to this case? A detective who investigated the April strafing of Ricky's Pathfinder said his gut instincts told him it was drug-related. But as rap promoter Mickey Bentson points out, "Police always assume that if they're black and rich it must be drugs." Bentson adds cryptically that one could even say "Ricky did the police a favor by trying to nail that guy and defend himself. The cops are gonna do it themselves in a couple of years and get patted on the back for it."

Regardless of whether or not justice is (color) blind, there *is* something else to this case, but it doesn't involve drugs—it involves murder. Remember Rick's account of the incident outside his home, when he fired a shot through the door to scare off the would-be burglar? The police later investigated whether Rick may have hit the person—or even killed him.

According to sources in the 47th Precinct, a man named Cornell Sutherland was found dead a block and a half from Ricky's house on DeRiemer Avenue on Thursday morning, April 19, 1990. Interestingly, the next night, April 20, was when Ricky's car got shot up outside the Castle—an incident which heretofore was viewed as unprovoked. Perhaps that's why Rick told police that the robbery attempt outside his door was in June, not April. And perhaps Mark wasn't joking when he allegedly threatened to kill Rick and his mother. After all, Rick's lawyer James Gagliardi said at the sentencing that Rick was "paranoid" and "terrorized" because the word on the street was that Mark would kill Rick if he saw him. Rick, in desperation, figured he'd get to Mark first, and apparently did. "That's the code up in the Bronx," Bill Adler notes. "If you get vicked [victimized] and don't do anything, you're a sucker."

The cops, however, didn't suspect Ricky of Sutherland's murder at the time. It was only after his arrest in July—when he told them about shooting through the door—that they started investigating. So why wasn't Ricky prosecuted? Investigators from the 47th say they found no evidence to match the bullet in Sutherland's body to the guns later found in Rick's car. They went to Ricky's house looking for clues, but the shot-through door had been replaced. It remains an unsolved homicide.



Rick leaves the court with his mother.

FUNNY THING IS, RICKY DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A murderer. When I interviewed him, the only thing he looked like was a million bucks. He was resplendent in yellow from head to toe. Not only were the oversized Kangol beret, the windowpane checked suit, the socks and the shirt all yellow—but the Bally kicks were too. Rounding out the ensemble were the nose stud, diamond-encrusted front tooth, bracelets, rope necklaces, medallions embossed with a lion, a scorpion, a Libra sign, and finally, as Syd Barrett once said, "lots of rings and things to make it look good." Somehow the whole shebang actually worked. The $60,000 worth of gold around Rick's neck dangled and jangled, but it never got in the way.

"You got to have a lot of balls and be pretty strong to wear that much gold," says Russell Simmons. "On anybody else it would be too much, but that just shows how different and special Ricky is."

Different and special. Lots of people seemed to coddle Ricky. You'd think he was either retarded or some kind of boy king. A truly funky King Tut. And though I told Ricky not to worry, when he ended our conversation by saying, "Don't make me look bad," I had to be careful not to catch Mailer's Syndrome and paint the man as a Jack Henry Abbott (the criminal cause célèbre who killed after stormin' Norman helped get him released). For one thing, there were the contradictions: Ricky has said he "was never on the gold tip" before the first album; Dana said he was always into it since high school. Ricky says his cousin was the first guy who tried to rob him; Dana again says they'd dealt with that shit since high school. Ricky said he didn't tell the cops about the robbery attempt outside his front door because he thought they'd bust him for his guns, but the way he put it to me was, "What good's a yellow piece of paper [restraining order] when you're dead?"

These erratic accounts only serve to illuminate the different Ricks: There was Ricky, the shy, sensitive, easily heartbroken mama's boy who scrubbed behind his ears, the only rapper to ever pout in profile like Michael Stipe. Then there was Rick, the big star and would-be Jamaican baddie obsessed with gold and guns. In his cardigan Ricky looked almost the professor. Add the eye patch and you had a pirate.

The result of these two personalities, Ricky and Rick, rubbing up against each other was predictable enough to childhood friend Dana Dane. "I always knew something was gonna happen," says Dane. "I just didn't know what."

Most people interviewed for this piece agree that Rick was "unbalanced" and a "genius." As Russell Simmons put it, "A lot of great poets have a background and attitude that's normal, whereas Ricky is a true artist—he's kind of bugged, like my man Miles Davis."

Then again, Ricky didn't plead insanity, he pled guilty. So isn't it a cop-out to say that this Hendrix, this Miles Davis of rap, was crazy? Not really. Of course, anyone who attempts murder has already crossed the line, but Rick isn't the archetypal "Crazy Nigger" in the Huey Newton mold. Rather, he's crazy like a fox. "I was never shooting people for no reason," he explains. And in his mind it all made perfect sense.

CARLA GAHR

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There's no MTV in the hotel room; there's jazz in the street. Looking out the eighth-floor window, feeling the night heat beat against it like a flurry of eighth notes gone astray, I see a gang of youths who splash in the pool and boogie to the rhythms of the boom box nearby. The soul of rock'n'roll is down there, rolling off the youthful backs and nappy heads like so many beads of chlorinated pool fluid. What did the tall kid tell me when I asked him where he lived? "I live anywhere I want to live. I got places to live all over this city." Then he checks a beeper. "See those girls over there?" he says pointing to the painted, bikinied babes lounging on the row of chaise lounges with all the tint and energy of cued-up eight balls. "They

SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT plays truth or dare in the City That Care Forgot.

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hookers."

"How do you know?" I ask him.

"I just know. That man gives them money. And I even saw two guys come over here, then go in the room with one of them." He laughs and lights a Salem. "They hookers. Them hoes are clockin' much dollars."

"How old are you?" I want to know.

"Me? I'm seventeen. They ain't clockin' much dollars as I am, though. You hear what I'm sayin'? Where you from?"

I tell him I'm from New York. He tells me about a trip he made to N.Y.C. once. "Y'all got that hard rap music up there. And those hard rappers." He points to my Smooth Ice T-shirt to emphasize his point.

SAVAGE ELEGANCE AND CORRUPT innocence: This city *is* rock'n' roll. They call New Orleans "The City That Care Forgot." You look at the houses that Tennessee Williams peopled with decadent and needful wanderers, two- and three-story abodes, terraced, on streets with names like Carondelet and Bourbon, and you hear the strains of some beautiful noise—jazz in this case—easing over the fenced-in lots. You go to the pleasantly plush and paneled offices of WYLD, the black-hits station in the middle of a poor and marshy neighborhood, with walls lined with the metallized thank-yous of record companies: PRESENTED TO WYLD TO COMMEMORATE OUR BIGGEST YEAR EVER FOR GOLD AND PLATINUM ALBUMS the display reads, and 1983's finest surround it: Eddy Grant's *Killer on the Rampage*, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, the Isley Brothers' *Between the Sheets*, Culture Club's *Kissing to be Clever*, Luther Vandross's *Forever, For Always, For Love*, and Mtume's *Juicy Fruit*. You drive by a cemetery called Odd Fellows Rest and you notice that the dead are buried above the ground. You know that sounds oxymoronic—buried above—but it's true, the city is a shallow city (there are no basements) and the current from powerful Lake Pontchartrain will wash the dead ashore if they are anywhere beneath the ground.

KNOWLEDGE OF NEW ORLEANS comes from the movies. James Bond's romp through the South in *Live and Let Die* showcased one of the world-renowned jazz funerals. Mickey Rourke's flat ass became the erotic punchline of Alan Parker's problematic *Angel Heart*. And Dennis Quaid charmed Ellen Barkin into charismatic betrayal in *The Big Easy*. A theme park, New Orleans seems on celluloid a place where white people smile and name that tune and black people smile and play that tune. I was told to go to Tipitina's, the famous music spot where, once upon a time, the KKK met for meetings. Truth or dare? Dare—I dare you to find some rock'n'roll down here.

THEY CALL IT SECOND LINE MUSIC. The second line is the line behind the jazz funeral procession, the children and adults reveling in the music that signifies the passing on. Brass instruments careen through the streets, sending a message of hope and forlorn glory to the passersby gathered and the survivors huddled nearby.

"You gotta hear second line," everybody tells me.

This is jazz, I think. Young people listen to jazz down here? Without it being forced upon them?

"It's here from the start. It's the earliest music we hear," the guy at the pool tells me, demonstrating the herky-jerky dance called second lining. As he dances, his head a-twirl, his feet making a maze of ministeps, I forget that he's probably involved in something terribly dangerous (living in a hotel, wearing a beeper, acknowledging the hookers, et cetera) and is actually just a 17-year-old kid who can probably take care of himself.

"You gotta hear Rebirth."

Okay, this is the eighth time I've heard this name, Rebirth, as in the Rebirth Brass Band, a motley crew of assorted brass players who have taken this old-form music and play like age-old veterans. The Dirty Dozen Brass Band play the same kinds of stuff, but Rebirth plays it funky, doing Michael Jackson and Donny Hathaway songs, musically rearranging the classic songs of these artists into classy, brassy displays of wonder.

"Young people listen to jazz down here? Without it being forced upon them?"

"It's here from the start. It's the earliest music we hear."

STILL LOOKING AT WOLF'S, A whirling dervish of a dive located somewhere in uptown New Orleans, the Rebirth Brass Band takes the stage. They play every Tuesday night in this place, located near all these old plantation houses and big cars. The crowd mixes college boys in Birkenstocks, junky cowboys in Stetsons and boots, a white woman with a camcorder, and a few of the die-hard black fans who would prefer to see the band in the Glass House, where other black people will be and second lining will be in full swing.

"These guys opened for the Dead when they played here," says a night nurse recently transplanted from San Francisco.

"Really?" I say. I try to imagine Rebirth, who bring the jazz parade inside, young men with horns, no mikes, no amplification, opening for the Grateful Dead, with this, the happiest fuck music I've ever heard. "Really?" I ask again.

But by then she's dancing, and I can see where the roots of her real hair are fighting with the strands of her blonded hair, and I'm dancing, too.

THERE'S NO MTV IN THE HOTEL room, just Madonna on *Saturday Night Live*, cavorting in Wayne and Garth's rock'n'roll dreamscape. This is it, the soul of rock'n'roll, the heart and lungs and breasts and lips and peroxide of rock'n'roll, comin' at ya like a bat out of pretaped hell. Truth or dare? Truth. . . . Have you ever been to a stranger city?

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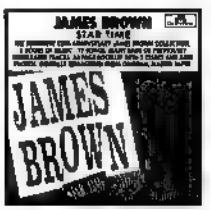

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THE BIG

RICHARD GEHR pays a visit to the friendly ghost town.

GREETINGS FROM CASPER, THE friendly ghost town—a recession-atrophied metropolis of 46,742 (if you lived there, you'd be homeless by now), Wyoming's largest city spits on your cynical cosmopolitanism. Even locals call it the Big Empty and joke about opening a wind-oriented theme park in the country's fourth breeziest hellhole (right after Amarillo, Texas).

I eventually stumble upon a strangely deserted bookstore in downtown Casper, a district whose boarded-up windows and ubiquitous realty signs suggest an attack by Patriot missiles—or worse, Reaganomics. The shop's owner, a hard-scrabble character we'll call Jack, is obviously less proud of his stock than his fine homemade cabinetry, although an extensive collection of vintage SF paperbacks are alphabetized lovingly.

Jack enthusiastically describes the wonders of fishing the Wyoming mountains and about how this building used to house a wild saloon and whorehouse whose chambers of love can still be sniffed in the furniture store next door. He tells me the economy "hasn't been too kind to this area; the coal industry's going down the tubes," while uranium and oil aren't doing so well either. And he tells me Casperites enjoy outdoor sports like hunting, fishing, and "especially snowmobiling."

But where's the action, Jack?

"My wife and I haven't gone dancing in about three years. The other day, though, I ran into my old friend Dave, one of the best pedal steel players you'll ever hear. His band's playing tonight at the American Legion post down Second Street, behind the television station."

But where's the *action*, Jack?

"There's the Beacon Club. Bronco's. Oh, and isn't the Avalon open again, Frank?" Jack asks the dour and portly gent looming behind me.

"Yep," Frank replies reluctantly. "But I wouldn't go there if I was from New York."

Fuck you too, Frank. The Avalon is located in industrially contaminated Evansville, the proverbial darkness at the edge of Casper. After registering the lack of live music Sunday night, I ambled up to the bar and ordered a Bud Light. "You've got good taste," remarked the huge and hairy truck-drivin' man to my left as he hefted his own Light in the universally recognized symbol of weight-conscious alcoholic camaraderie.

Casper is indeed a town of fine honky-tonks patronized by the many car- and truckfuls of fleshy white people sitting three abreast you see cruising aimlessly about. And tonks don't get any honkier than Saturday night at Bronco's. A prominent sign just inside the door advertises Ladies' Nite on Tuesdays, a time when five dollars buys all the juice a pretty woman can swill ("well or draft") until 1:00 A.M. Or date rape, whichever comes first. I never do find out why country drummers place Plexiglas shields between kit and crowd—is it aesthetic or prophylactic? But the Terry Miller band's Saturday-night, one-size-fits-all repertoire—from ZZ Top and Roy Orbison covers to by-the-numbers two-steps—is a bland turn indeed from earlier in the evening, when . . . but we'll get to that later.

Monday night at the Beacon Club ("Thanks for sneakin' to the Beacon") differs from Bronco's as much in quantity as quality. Exactly four plucky patrons show up for Chugwater's first night. "Is it always this busy?" I ask the large, handsome cowgirl behind the bar.

"This is real unusual," she replies. "But it's the first nice day we've had in a while, so people are probably at home working on their yards."

A perfectly competent, even enjoyable young country outfit, Chugwater is undermined by an overly smug lead singer whose goofy patter negates the substantial emotionality conveyed by the band's pedal steel and violin players. I'd love to hear this group playing to a packed club late Saturday night, after the cowboys have gotten drunk, assertive, and mean. I'd like to hear this band play a little scared. "I feel like Hank Williams," sings the smirking front person. And I feel a little nauseous.

I retreat to Moonlight Liquors and Lounge, a package store-*cum*-rock club on the other bad side of town. All Eyes is beginning its residence with Beatles and Aerosmith covers, and I don't last too long. Two nights earlier I'd submitted myself to the power and glory of Rose Tattoo here, another of the peripatetic bands from Montana or Colorado or Uruguay that ramble through Casper for a week at a time. Tattoo are the type of post-Van Halenites who scream things like: "*We've got a request for some Pink Floyd!*" and "*After we play this ballad we're gonna kick some more butt!!*" and "*It's beginning to look like ladies night in here!!!*" The lead guitarist's idea of high concept is to wander into the audience, find an empty seat where the gurlz are, and diddle his fretboard in that swift, meaningless fashion pioneered by Eddie Van and Steve Vai.

Landmarks of Casper nightlife. *Below*, the Avalon, *left to right*, the American Legion, the Beacon Club, and Bronco's. And finally (moving right along), some typical Wyoming weather (a dust storm).

EMPTY

By the time I leave Casper, I have been countryized, countryfied, and country-fried. I have consumed God's own barbecue at Smokin' Bo's; concluded that breakfast *is* the most important meal of the day, at least at Herbo's; snapped a photo of Hell's ½ Acre; and recharged my spiritual batteries while cruising lost highways at 85 miles per hour listening with renewed and properly contextualized appreciation to such slick country lightweights as Ricky Van Shelton, Vern Gosdin, and the Mississippi Pirates.

Barreling down the highway in a tiny blue Festiva (I turned down the big red Cutlass because I do not eat meat), certain crazy-quilt granite formations and crimson buttes move me as much as any music ever has or will. Roadside signs inform me that the formation to my right, as I squeal up Wind River Canyon toward beautiful Thermopolis, convulsed into existence 30 to 40 million years ago. More or less.

The American West has always embodied a dream of something bigger, faster, easier, and better—of nothing less than a working person's paradise. Men fought wars (with Native Americans, Mexicans, Prussians, Japanese, Iraqis, you name it) to wrest such comforts for themselves as their God-given just desserts. You will perhaps recognize this dream of *more* as being somewhere near the heart of anything resembling rock music.

Which is precisely why there are American Legion posts across America and, more specifically, American Legion Post No. 2. If you've ever attempted to crash an American Legion party, you've no doubt experienced the trepidation with which I approached the squat, dirty-white building surrounded by pickups. This was, after all, our country's retired warrior class *at play*. But the door was open and so was I.

Yet this was not just any American Legion bacchanal—it was Luau Night at Post No. 2. The pineappled ham thing was just being removed from the bridge-table buffet as I entered, and I am overwhelmed by the sight of a roomful of unusually attired, middle-aged cowpersons swaying to the strains of "Oh Lonesome Me." The women positively glow in their brightly patterned muumuus. The men, on the other hand, look downright postmodern in Hawaiian shirts, straight-legged Wrangler jeans, and polished Tony Lamas. The walls are festooned with images from a Hawaiian party pack, grass-skirted women hulaing in static satisfaction. An imagined Hawaii of the soul.

And how to describe the band, barely discernible at the dark end of the hall? They are horribly wonderful. A Day-Glo sign on the wall, illuminated by a blacklight tipped to an askew angle, announces the presence of the Neon Prairie Dogs, while a mechanical gorilla dances a weary hula on a speaker cabinet.

The dance-floor crowd waxes and wanes. Fresh-faced boys wearing Jams show no embarrassment as they dance with their sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. And then all at once every chair in the room empties as the first strains of the international slow-dance anthem of the universe are heard. Every partner turns to his date and the pool table clears as the Neon Prairie Dogs unwind a slow, mournful version of no less strangely familiar a chestnut as "House of the Rising Sun," with the pedal steel player taking Alan Price's despairing organ part.

It isn't easy to understand how a traditional black folk song about a New Orleans whorehouse, made famous 27 years ago by white British invaders under the influence of Bob Dylan, should still exert such a compulsive pull on the heartstrings. But consider for a moment the tune's emotional despair, its intrinsic emptiness, even its seemingly endless length. Notice how it ebbs and flows like dirty water on a beach. Think about its intrinsic exoticism(s), its psychedelic overtones and bluesy origins recalling past failures and insinuating hope for the future. Maybe this is all it takes to jump start a 40-year marriage on a Saturday evening in America. Maybe this is how it is unconsciously perceived this particular Luau Night in Casper, Wyoming, in the Big Empty its own yearning self. And if this isn't somewhere very near the soul of rock and fucking roll, I don't know what is.

Aloha.

RICHARD GEHR

the soul of rock'n'roll?

Stephen King
The dirty little secret of rock'n'roll is this: It died around the time the CD really caught on. R.I.P.

Michelle Shocked
The soul of rock'n'roll thrives whenever and wherever people play more music than they purchase.

Melissa Etheridge
I believe the soul of rock'n'roll is something you can't put your finger on and identify; rather, it's something you can feel. It's something you find in many different forms of music. The soul of rock'n'roll is exactly that—a soul. It's not the way you play, it's not chord progressions. It's how you feel about the music you're making.

Sam Moore
I'm not sure I know what the soul of rock'n'roll is but I sure can tell you what the soul *in* rock'n'roll is. It's feeling! Deep moving feelings that comes from the gut when you sing. It's what you put in the music and what's in the music (the song) already. Testifying! It's moving your audience to that frenzy that you get when you go to church and "the Rev" is hocking and preaching and teaching and everyone is shouting "Amen!" and "Oh Lord!" It's sweat! It's putting it all into it. Oh yeah, I can tell you what it ain't, too. It's not a track of repetitious monotony, a *groove* as they call it. It's not singing lots of hooks and then linking them together. It's not slick and fancy. It's more to the earth, gritty and powerful. Today it seems to have an awful lot to do with production. You can't simulate *the real* soul with drum machines, slick 8Pl tracks, and mix tricks. soul just add water.

ANTIHERO

OPINION

DEAN CHRISTOPHER, who will be a senior citizen before anyone else at SPIN, remembers when rock was young.

IT IS 1955 AND WE ARE ALL SAFE. THE ONLY THINGS TO FEAR are losing the big game, or getting catsup on your letter sweater. Our world is a world of keeping your room clean and getting homework in on time. Of lawn trimming and Christmas caroling and parties in the Metcalf twins' finished basement. These are the days before you could smell magazine ads; before radicchio or tofu or seat belts. There is no crack, no AIDS, no drive-by shootings. There are no expansion teams: Washington has the Senators, Brooklyn has the Dodgers. Everybody has two parents, and neither is in therapy. "Long-hair musicians" play violins or oboes. TV comes to you in glorious black and white. "Cable" refers to a rope made of steel.

It is a time when I am still Dean Calcagno of Rockville Centre, Long Island. I am thin and eager and smart and beginning to explore the wider world I will soon inhabit as a grownup. That world has no fanatic ayatollahs, no car bombs, no hooded terrorists with automatic weapons and complicated agendas. The world loves and admires Americans; we go everywhere and buy everything cheap. The only "third world" is a quaint collection of benign faraway places pictured in *National Geographic*, teeming with shirtless black or tan women.

Still, there *are* some dangers. Avoid crowded beaches or you'll get polio. Stay under your desk in case of Russian A-bombs, and don't look at the flash. Meanwhile, tricked-up 425-HP eight-cylinder muscle cars roar across the land! They thunder defiantly past the malt shops, and nice boys with clean hands fear for their dates, who must be home by 11:00—and who secretly long to ride with the hot-rodders laying rubber down Sunrise Highway. But that is essentially the sum and substance of our stress. Mainly we inhabit a secure world of junior high where boys wear short hair and slacks, and the girls are virgins in page boys, skirts, and circle pins. We will all go to college, we will all be rich and happy.

We believe that our world will run smoothly all the way to the vanishing point, because there's nothing to suggest otherwise. In a few years we will own houses and power mowers and station wagons and buy Perry Como records for our own kids' dance parties. We will still be safe.

FROM THE START, ROCK'N'ROLL WAS TROUBLE MUSIC. There never was anything quite like it. Even the Jazz Age with its flappers and speakeasies never matched the pervasive effect that rock'n'roll had in the '50s. Rock resonated throughout all aspects of life, and became the central premise of youth culture—a culture that was, until then, best defined in terms of Little League baseball, Boy Scouts, and surreptitious gasping over purloined pinups. But rock'n'roll drew a line in the sand separating us from everything we were trying to break away from. It changed us from kids into instant, if miniature, adults. It did more than stake out the territory; it also defined the armies.

Rock'n'roll was the acoustic coefficient of puberty, like hormones you could hear. Powerful stuff for a time when nature's cruelest chemistry is rolling through a lad's bloodstream, making him pimply and intolerable, incapable of dreaming of anything much more evolved than unhooking a cheerleader's bra. Rock hit at the precise moment my friends and I were being buffeted by our first major testosterone storm. We easily became willing, exuberant prisoners of our time: the first kids in history ever to grow up with rock'n'roll!

My town established a youth center in one of the schools to keep us kids from drifting into juvenile delinquency over the summer. And so it happened that, the year we were 14, Mom dropped Tom Otwell and me off for a few hours of clean-cut municipally approved fun. We got out of the blue '52 Buick Special, the one with the ventilation holes in the sides, wearing our cleanest jeans and plaid cotton shirts. Our hair was combed. Mom said she'd be back at ten, when the fun closed down. Tom and I trooped inside, resigned to another youth center evening of Ping-Pong, Nok-Hockey, and "popular music," played on a stack-45 record player next to an open mike on the stage in the gym, presided over by a PTA volunteer. These evenings involved about a hundred awkward teenagers in a highly structured ritual: Girls danced with girls while we boys talked sports, played games, and acted rugged, pretending not to notice the girls.

This night seemed no different. It started out as just another evening of music by Perry Como, Nat "King" Cole, Tony Bennett, the Ames Brothers, the McGuire Sisters, and Perez Prado ("It's Cherry Pink and Apple

Art by Stephen Sprouse

Bill Haley and His Comets, circa the good old days.

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Blossom White"). But it suddenly became something completely unexpected. I remember the exact moment. Richie Avondet had just finished me off at Nok-Hockey, 21 to 5, and Julius LaRosa's Italian-language novelty record, "Eh Cumpari," was ending. The dancing area was deserted, because Italian-language novelty hits aren't anything you want to dance to, at least not with a girl. Not even if you're Italian. Nearby to my left I noticed a lovely blond Ukrainian girl named Oksana who was talking to one of those tough chicks with black neckerchiefs and chickers on their heels. That type hung out with leathery older guys from South Hempstead who drove and smoked. Some were even rumored to go "all the way." But I was watching Oksana, who was "nice." Tom knew I wanted to meet her, because he was my best friend and that's the kind of thing that best friends know. Just as I was wishing I could dance with her, fate intervened, and the world was never the same again.

One, two, three o'clock, four o'clock rock
Five, six, seven o'clock, eight o'clock rock
Nine, ten, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock rock
*We're gonna rock around the clock tonight**

Within 15 seconds every kid in the place was dancing. Nok-Hockey, Ping-Pong, chess, even the trampoline—all were dropped quicker than a turd with cooties. Those without partners danced by themselves or in a group. Boys actually danced with girls—without being forced to!

Here at last was music we *wanted* to dance to, unlike that gucky stuff they played on Wednesdays in gym class for social dancing, when embarrassed P.E. teachers taught equally embarrassed adolescents the niceties of the polka and fox trot.

"Rock Around the Clock" was the only "unapproved" record at the youth center that night. So naturally we demanded it over and over again, once three times in a row. The authorities threw up their hands in good humored despair. Maybe they saw no reason to aggravate this cheerful uprising, the musical equivalent of a food fight. Each time Bill Haley and His Comets started up the thrill was just as keen, as if their jaunty shuffle rhythm were somehow connected to our rookie genitalia. Finally I asked Oksana to dance and she did, and my chest suddenly felt huge, bigger than Charles Atlas's. My friends danced, too, with each other and with kids they didn't know, with kids they didn't even usually talk to. We danced until we sweated, until we were out of breath; we danced until the Pepsi and Mrs. Hunziker's punch were all gone. Never before had we known dancing with that acknowledged sense of complicity. It was our first experience of boy-really-meets-girl. We were wrapped up in the excitement of that discovery, and it was terrific.

THE KIDS WHO DANCED THAT night are all gone. Thirty-five years have whispered past. Somewhere along the way, we all turned into grownups, dispersed, and followed the separate paths that brought us to age 50. We did go to college, as planned. Some of us even became rich. We have seen our safe old world become the scary world it is today. My friends have scattered; some are dead. Others I see from time to time, and it's as good as ever. Tom Otwell is still my friend. He lives in Maryland, and now he has a gray beard and his kids are in college. Over the decades we've all moved on to love other music much more than that primitive, naive rock'n'roll from the summer of '55. But I'll bet that none of us has ever forgotten what it meant back then.

Rock'n'roll drew a line in the sand separating us from everything we were trying to break away from.

And I won't forget how I felt on that summer evening so long ago, when the only thing in my heart was "Rock Around the Clock" and doing the lindy with Oksana Sagaty. I talked to her only a few times after that; she has probably never once thought of me since. Mom and Mrs. Otwell were outside at ten as promised. Did we have a good time? "It was okay," said Tom. "Not bad," I added, my heart slamming around inside my chest. As the Buick pulled away we each sank into our own secret boy-thoughts. Now we knew about *real* dancing, and why there were girls. On that night Tom and I were taller than the basketball nets at the senior high, we were bulletproof, we could even have outrun Jay Greene's new English Racer. That was rock'n'roll.

If I close my eyes just so, I see it all again; if I open up the youngest part of my heart, I can even feel it. I swear I can.

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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

After seven years of debate over who really discovered HIV, accusations mount against Dr. Robert Gallo. Did Gallo lie about discovering the virus he's built his career on? ANTHONY LIVERSIDGE reports.

IT IS HARD FOR A REPORTer not to like Robert C. Gallo, the chief of the Laboratory of Tumor Cell Biology at the National Cancer Institute and longtime ruler of AIDS research in America. Gallo, despite his renowned arrogance, has a vitality and personal warmth rare among scientists, and he flatters, cajoles, and evades pointed questions with a teasing charm. He has long played on the weakness of the press in dealing with the top AIDS scientist. Establishment reporters need to keep on the right side of big shots whose quotes give their stories credibility.

Now, however, the game may be up for Bob Gallo, whose own credibility is in serious doubt, and this time by his own admission. In late May Gallo finally admitted, point-blank, in a letter to the top scientific journal *Nature* that he had not—as he has insisted for seven years—independently discovered HIV, the AIDS virus. In effect, he acknowledged that he discovered HIV in the mail. The specimen he found in his NCI laboratory in 1984 was the same HIV forwarded twice to him by Luc Montagnier of the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Gallo apologized for throwing more heat than light on the question in the past.

The turnabout came at the end of a series of revelations. First, in February of this year, Gallo claimed that his virus was not—as had long been established—the same as the French virus. He had analyzed leftover samples from his lab refrigerator and found they had a different molecular sequence from Montagnier's. He had suggested that perhaps Montagnier had discovered Gallo's virus, rather than vice versa.

Montagnier, stung by this effrontery, went back to his own fridge and discovered that the HIV samples both sides had patented were indeed contaminated. But the contamination had first taken place in the Pasteur laboratory. Conclusion: Gallo's virus was without doubt the one first found in Montagnier's lab. The Pasteur Institute had sent a mislabeled sample to Gallo, which later had been "discovered" by Gallo. Gallo had to concede.

The stunning admission has many ramifications. One of them is that the validity of the U.S. patent for a blood test for HIV antibodies is now in doubt. The lucrative patent has earned Gallo and a colleague half a million dollars each in royalties so far. Beyond that, it renews questions of how good a scientist Gallo actually is, questions raised at length by Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter John Crewdson in the *Chicago Tribune* since November 1989.

At best, the mix-up was due to unwitting contamination, which is now Gallo's excuse. Contamination is a risk in every virus laboratory. In fact, Gallo made a fool of himself this way in 1975 when a new "human" virus he published had to be retracted—it was a contamination, a mix of gibbon and baboon viruses.

At worst this incident was conscious fraud, stealing credit for finding the alleged key to AIDS. What outside observers must now wonder is how much truth there is in the rest of Crewdson's accusations. Crewdson has portrayed a Gallo who stole credit from underlings on several occasions, and then tried to destroy their careers. Gallo rewrote the record of scientific meetings to make it look like he had presented papers that he had not. He even refused to lend the Centers for Disease Control samples of "his" HIV unless they promised in writing not to compare it with other viruses—prima facie evidence that he feared they would find it the same as the French one.

Montagnier himself has now publicly accused Gallo of lying. The accusations are being investigated by a National Institutes of Health review panel, which is due to report shortly. If the report concludes that Gallo deliberately stole the virus, he faces the loss of his job and possible criminal prosecution. These are not the only flies of scandal swarming around Gallo's head. In the past two years two of his chief researchers have been accused of stealing federal funds, and one was convicted last year. Meanwhile, NIH has banned Gallo's collaboration with a French scientist on AIDS vaccine research. Gallo's vaccine is said to have been tested on children in Zaire without NIH authorization.

The credibility of Gallo and his science is critical to AIDS research. The

EMILYA NAYMARK

entire multibillion-dollar effort to combat AIDS worldwide rests on the theory that HIV causes the dread syndrome, a theory that ultimately rests squarely on Gallo's shoulders. For unlike Montagnier, Gallo rushed to label HIV the AIDS culprit in April 1984, joining Margaret Heckler, the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, in a press conference which made the theory official U.S.—and thus world—policy.

Even at the time, the evidence fell short of solid proof; among other problems, HIV itself had been found in only half the AIDS patients tested. And Berkeley's Peter Duesberg, Gallo's fellow retrovirologist and a leader in the field, has never tired of pointing out that the evidence that has accumulated since more often undermines the theory than serves to shore it up. As Mathilde Krim, head of AmFar once said, as a scientific question the issue remains open: "We can't prove HIV causes AIDS and Duesberg can't prove it doesn't!"

In fact, the sideshow of Gallo dodging brickbats of scandal has distracted attention from the most important issue in AIDS. Is Gallo leading the world down the garden path with HIV? The fierce quarrel over whether Gallo stole credit for HIV has falsely suggested that no one can question the value of the prize.

In the seven years since Gallo triumphantly announced his theory, he has been notably unenthusiastic about reviewing it, though HIV science has failed to yield a vaccine, a cure, or even a safe medication for AIDS.

Gallo's most blatant failure to answer the scientific doubts about HIV followed the publication of Duesberg's most thorough critique, a 10,000-word paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, over two years ago. Gallo received an early copy of the paper and promised the editor that he would reply. The journal published a notice to that effect, but Gallo never did so.

All this is why the biggest news of the past two months is not the unfolding scandals surrounding Gallo, but this: The prominent researcher has finally replied to Duesberg—sort of. He hasn't replied in a scientific journal, where he would have had, like his critics, to provide proper scientific references for every claim, and have his facts reviewed by other scientists before publication.

But Gallo has now published an outspoken autobiography, in which he devotes generous space to the arguments of his most active scientific critics, Duesberg and Robert Root-Bernstein of Michigan. Until the NIH verdict is public, *Virus Hunting—AIDS, Cancer, and the Human Retrovirus: A Story of Scientific Discovery* (BasicBooks, New York), is the best answer to the double barreled question at the core of AIDS: How good a scientist is Gallo, and why is he so sure that HIV is the cause of AIDS?

Probably only those with a detailed knowledge of the arguments, counterarguments, and counter-counterarguments for and against HIV can judge for themselves how good a case for HIV Gallo makes.

But there are indications of weakness in the very style. Gallo's review of HIV theory is not the judicious, evenhanded overview of an elder statesman of science. It is, disappointingly, heavily partisan. This is advocacy science. Name-calling is barely restrained.

In Gallo's view all his critics are unqualified, and anyone who does not "accept the scientific results we have achieved with HIV" is like a member of the "Flat Earth Society, which has evolved a complex rationale to explain away all the evidence that the earth is round."

Most scientists "get some fun out" of Duesberg, Gallo says, or see him as a "useful gadfly" who nevertheless is "very wrong." Duesberg, he tells readers, is a Ph.D. with a background in chemistry, who made "significant contributions to our understanding of animal (especially chicken) retroviruses many years ago and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences." But "he is not an epidemiologist, a physician, or a public health official. He has never worked on . . . any disease of humans, including AIDS. Nor has he ever worked with HIV."

The lucrative patent for the HIV-antibody test has earned Gallo and a colleague half a million dollars each in royalties so far.

All very true. But then, is Gallo, M.D., any more qualified than Duesberg to explain why HIV is the cause of AIDS? Like Duesberg, he is not an epidemiologist (an expert on how disease occurs among populations). On the evidence to date, Gallo's lab work in virology has raised far more questions than Duesberg's, which a letter last year in *Nature* claimed was good enough to deserve the Nobel Prize. Meanwhile, Duesberg's expertise in AIDS epidemiology is now great enough that he recently published another paper in the *Proceedings* showing that the evidence of epidemiology—now virtually the only basis for saying HIV causes AIDS—actually argues that HIV does not cause AIDS.

Gallo makes a fair (though not always accurate) statement of Duesberg's case against HIV in his book, before trying to demolish it. But even outsiders will wonder how good Gallo's thinking is when they see obvious flaws. Gallo is so busy contradicting everything in sight that he quite often contradicts himself. The only major point Gallo concedes is that the correlation of HIV with AIDS doesn't prove the virus is the cause, though he calls it "one hell of a good beginning."

Gallo agrees that HIV does not meet the requirements of Koch's postulates, the rules framed by the German bacteriologist Robert Koch a century ago to pin down the cause of a disease. Gallo reasons they must be out of date. It is hard to see why, since they are rules of logic, hardly more than common sense. Koch only suggested that if possible, a suspected cause has to be found in every case of the disease, and then, when taken out and injected into a healthy animal, produce the disease again.

Koch's ghost haunts Gallo, who actually invents a whole new Koch postulate in order to prove Koch wrong—that "in every case where we find the germ, we find the disease." None of the standard reference works list this rule, and it seems unlikely that Koch, who discovered the tuberculosis bacillus, didn't appreciate that it inhabits many more people than come down with the disease (in fact, probably most of us carry it).

In fact, a few pages on, seemingly forgetting what he said earlier, Gallo writes that "the asymptomatic carrier and subclinical infections [are] known for almost every microbe. We learned this in the century since Koch, and actually Koch knew it himself. Think of how many people get exposed to and infected from Koch's TB bacterium and never get sick!"

What emerges is that Gallo is defeated by the same inconsistencies in HIV-think that bother his critics. He really can't answer the awkward question of why AIDS is still overwhelmingly concentrated (91 percent) in men in the U.S., whereas in Haiti and Africa it has always been equally distributed between the sexes. Speculating wildly, Gallo conjures up, among other things, "ritualistic voodoo practices."

Nor can he explain the absence of detectable virus in the blood cells of so many AIDS patients, even dying ones. Gallo claims that a virus increases outside blood cells as disease progresses, quoting two papers to that effect which have appeared in the past two years. The papers have never been confirmed. Meanwhile, Gallo doesn't admit that the amount remains negligible by any standards.

Such concern with how much virus there is is "pure sophism," according to Gallo. But one of the studies recorded the awkward fact that 18 percent of the AIDS patients involved had no detectable evidence of the virus at all in their blood plasma, the supposed new reservoir of HIV, the supposed cause of their illness.

Nor can Gallo explain how, since HIV gets into only one in several hundred of the T-cells that disappear in AIDS, the virus is apparently able to kill billions of T-cells it does not ever inhabit. Gallo can still only say that there must be as yet unidentified "less direct mechanisms."

In the end, Gallo abandons his long insistence that HIV by itself "kills like a truck" to agree that cofactors may be involved in AIDS—though the only ones he favors are the herpes virus HHV-6, and HTLV-1, both his own discoveries. Here again he contradicts himself. A hundred pages earlier he writes as an argument against the theory of cofactors: "Multifactorial is multi-ignorance. Most of the factors go away when we learn the real cause of a disease."

EMILYA NAYMARK

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SPINS

REVIEWS EDITED BY JIM GREER

PLATTERS DU JOUR

HEAVY D. & THE BOYZ
Peaceful Journey
Atlantic

NICE & SMOOTH
Hip Hop Junkies
RAL-Def Jam

DOWNTOWN SCIENCE
Downtown Science
Def Jam

BLACK SHEEP
A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
Mercury

Big, excessive, loud: Hip hop culture is jeep culture, and to gauge a rap's true attack one must hear it boomin' from the system of a moving vehicle. Not on the radio, on tour, or on *Yo! MTV Raps.*

So Prince Paul—De La Soul's producer—took me and a friend out for a day in his Jeep Cherokee, complete with personality-installed boomin' system.

Prince Paul: *(Bobbing his head to the beat)* This Heavy D. record caters to radio. It's got street beats, familiar loops, it'll be a hit.

SPIN: *(Recognizing a sample from "Heartbreak Hotel" by the Jacksons)* How do you feel about obvious loops?

Prince Paul: Sometimes it's just the science of the market. We're automatically getting into this, 'cause it's new Heavy D. looping a record we used to love. But there's also some harder B-boy stuff in here. Stuff for everybody. It's highly marketed, but def. I probably won't be rockin' it, but I can hear that everybody else will, in jeeps, and on the radio. It's catchy, melodies and stuff. Typical Heavy D.

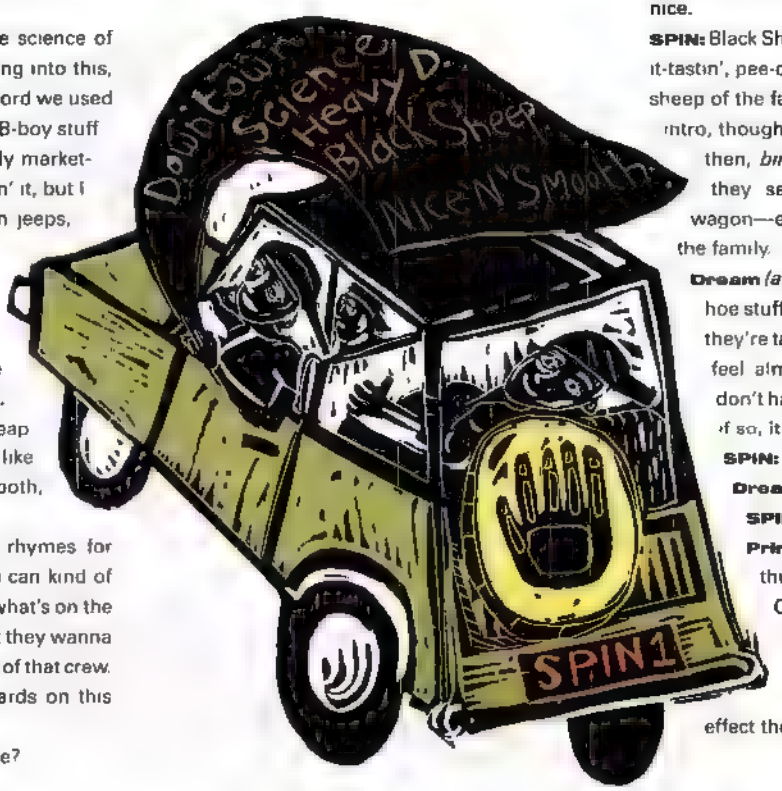
SPIN: Okay, what's next? Nice & Smooth . . .

Prince Paul: I like anything these guys do, so I guess I'm a little biased.

SPIN: I don't know, sounds kind of cheap to me, like they made it at home. But I like their rhyme style. Quirky yet smooth, y'know?

Prince Paul: Before, people wrote rhymes for fun. Now, they write to get paid. You can kind of tell who's doing what. They emulate what's on the radio, what's making the money, what they wanna G-off with. Nice & Smooth are not part of that crew. Actually, they did overdo the keyboards on this album.

SPIN: What about Downtown Science?



Prince Paul: Sam Sever's work is nice. I didn't like "Radioactive" too much, though.

SPIN: Neither did I. Gave no clue how the album is, how varied.

Prince Paul: It reminds me of that Mantronix kind of stuff, "Planet Rock" days, when everybody went through that 808 phase. Some of this stuff is really stiff.

SPIN: You like melodic rap?

Prince Paul: This has just enough melody. Not too much like a lot of the stuff coming out now, but not too little either. Somewhere in the middle. Sam Sever's production is dark, atmospheric that way. And he uses a lot of real instruments, which is nice.

SPIN: Black Sheep next, the "doo-doo eatin', vomit-tastin', pee-drinkin', premarital sex-havin' black sheep of the family." I love the first cut, after that intro, though. All the crashing macho-isms and then, *bing!*, a dream. That's cool because they seem to be rethinking the bandwagon—even if they are the black sheep of the family.

Dream *(a friend)***:** They still have all that bitch-hoe stuff in there; I'm not offended because they're talking that way—as a black woman I feel almost numb to that stuff—but you don't have to just throw it in there for spice. If so, it doesn't work.

SPIN: Unconvincing misogynists?

Dream: *(Laughing)* Exactly.

SPIN: Is hip hop gonna grow up with us?

Prince Paul: I don't know. . . . Something else is gonna have to develop. Question is, if it happens, are the record companies gonna jump on it and wear it out? Rap was lucky. No one thought it would last, so in effect they gave it time to grow.

Scott Poulson-Bryant

ILLUSTRATION BY SUSAN DeCAPITE

Soul Sincerity

BY LINDSAY BAKER

HOUSE STILL THRIVES, BUT alongside it a less anonymous, less frenetic groove is growing. With an artist-based emphasis on songwriting, real instruments, and live performance, this slower, more mellow sound, dubbed "new soul" by some, is grounded firmly in the verve and gritty intensity of real soul and jazz rather than studio wizardry.

In the U.K., the Talking Loud label champions this movement. One of the label's groups, **Young Disciples**, having provided the pulse for the London mid-'80s rare groove scene as DJs, have put this experience to good use with the earthy, funky "**Move On.**" Complete with smooth flutes and the soaring strains of vocalist Carleen Anderson (daughter of JB's soulstress Vicky Anderson), it demonstrates their seamless fusion of real instrumentation and adept sampling. Traditionalists they may be, but misty-eyed Luddites they clearly are not.

New York rapper Master Ace is featured on Young Disciples' forthcoming album—not surprisingly, since hip hop is central to this new breed of music. Rap groups such as **Gang Starr** and the **Dream Warriors**, who recently collaborated on the single "**I Lost My Ignorance**" (Island), helped break down barriers by combining samples from the jazz greats with live sax and rap. Purists may flinch, but jazz, soul, and hip hop are merging at an apparently unstoppable rate, as proven by the success of New York's mobile dance club, Giant Step, and its promoter, Groove Academy.

In an ephemeral and pathologically fast-paced business, Talking Loud is refreshingly open about acknowledging its roots: Jocelyn "Somebody Else's Guy" Brown provides vocals for **Incognito**'s stirring rendition of the classic "**Always There**" while **Galliano**'s "**Power and the Glory**" owes an undeniable debt to, among others, Sly and the Family Stone. Many of these new dance outfits are now adopting and adapting the rock'n'roll ethos of dynamic live concerts. **Omar**, Talking Loud's latest signing, and the **Brand New Heavies**—whose single "**Never Stop**" (Delicious Vinyl) is a swirling, jazzy opus—are both renowned for their live shows and for at last breaking free from the blandness of perfunctory club PAs.

"**There's Nothing Like This**," Omar's debut single on Talking Loud, like **Soul Family Sensation**'s "**Baby**" (Epic) and **Massive Attack**'s "**Safe From Harm**" (Virgin), is achingly pure, gut-wrenching soul. Having a face and identity to fit to that soul is another attraction of this new breed of artists. Personalities are and always will be the essence of pop; is it frivolous to suggest that dance music should be any different? A studio whiz kid can't compete with Madonna's pornographic decadence or the Happy Mondays' slobbish, boysy irreverence, but maybe the Brand New Heavies' onstage antics or Massive Attack's aura of unhinged genius can.

THE "A" LIST

Dodge City Productions, "Ain't Going for That" (4th & Broadway); **MC Buzz B**, "Never Change" (Polydor); **Night Trains**, "Street Chase" (BGP); **Jesus Loves You**, "Generations of Love ('90s Corporal Mix)" (Virgin); **Driza-Bone**, "Real Love" (4th & Broadway).

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THE DOORS
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AVISION

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● = Go directly to your local record store. Buy this album. Immediately. Kill if you must.

● = Whoa! Slow down, pal. This album is pretty good, but you can't buy everything in the store. Can you?

● = Stop it. Put that down. Go buy something to eat instead. You have to eat, too, you know.

TOM PETTY

Into the Great Wide Open

MCA

On *Into the Great Wide Open*, Tom Petty plugs his drawly voice and twangy guitar into a sweet hard-rock formula, producing as many radio-ready hits as he needs, each one as pleasantly crisp as a fresh greenback. His tunes are so basic these days that they stand or fall by the strength and (relative) originality of their catchphrases. Lines like "I'm learning to fly / But I ain't got wings" work; "A rebel without a clue" is lame. Further on, the dazed road-trip wisdom of "where the sky begins the horizon ends, despite the best intentions" anchors Petty's dreamy soul to reality.

His clichés of freedom and escape are "built to last": Petty's wide open dirty road may just be an image he ponders as his jet taxis down the runway, but it's an enduringly meaningful symbol for homebound fans. Also included are moral fables about yuppies and rock stars who "want it all," one drum break to die for, a political allegory, and songs about women that resonate oddly for anyone who recalls the scene in *The Silence of the Lambs* with Petty's "American Girl" playing in the background. *(available mid-July)*

Ivan Kreilkamp

PM DAWN

PM Dawn

Gee Street

Even if all they had going for them was the line "Christina Applegate, you gotta put me on," PM Dawn would still merit a ticker tape parade. As it is, these Jersey devils have synthesized hip hop heft, lush loveliness, ethereal harmonies, and hitherto untapped Anglophilia (they sample Spandau Ballet!) into an eye-popping, jaw-dropping, from-God's-mouth-to-your-ear debut which comes out of nowhere and ends up the front stoop soundtrack of the summer.

The hit track, the play track, the ultimate "Huh?" inducer, "Set Adrift on Memory Bliss" is a classic of languid lassitude. Deadpan as De La doing "West End Girls," "Memory" opens with a laconically drawled "The camera pans the cocktail glass behind a blind of plastic plants" and just gets better from there. Although at their most inspiring on the mellow tip, "Paper Doll" is another loose-fitting warm weather accessory—PMD throw down a massive gauntlet to the mush mouths and throwbacks around them, kicking up dust on the propulsive "If I Wuz U" and the excellently titled "Reality Used to Be a Friend of Mine."

This is an all-rapping, all singing outfit whose knockout vocal arrangements enhance its output rather than acting as a demographic come-on.

The band sounds British but it doesn't sound bloodless; it's hypercommercial but it doesn't make you hate yourself. By sounding effortless, PM Dawn makes everyone else seem lazy. *(available late August)*

Jonathan Bernstein

MASSIVE ATTACK

Blue Lines

Virgin

Midnight rockers, city slickers / All featured on the freak show / And I can't do nothin' bout that, no no," begins the simply beautiful *Blue Lines* by England's suavely sensuous sound system Massive Attack. Combining dark dance rhythms with an undertow of melodic strings and Shara Nelson's creamy, multitracked vocal pinings, Massive Attack assaults the ear and the ass, lulling and grooving. Who could ask for anything more?

Starting with the second half of the collection, though, Massive Attack conjures up a dream world of big, romantic riffs (the mix of keyboard, percussion, and the "hey hey hey" chant that closes out "Unfinished Sympathy" for instance). "Daydreaming" does the she-sings-he-raps gig, with a pounding boom-boom bass track enhanced by Massive's witty raps ("If I was a rich man, do do do do do do . . .") and Nelson's world weary yelps and utterances.

Horace Andy closes out the record, doing lead vocals on "Hymn of the Big Wheel," a have-hope anthem built on a reverse-reggae lilt punctu-

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EMERGO

81

ated by staccato horns and bass pickings. "One man struggles, while another relaxes," goes the chorus, and you think about the number of laid-back, big-groove bands to come down the pike since the sound system success of Soul II Soul. But Massive Attack is the relaxer, not the struggler, invoking a casual and cool landscape where the essence of the worldview is summed up in three little words. Play it loud. *(available early August)*

Scott Poulson-Bryant

CROWDED HOUSE

Woodface

Capitol

Folks who cheered the success of Neil Finn's combo may have suffered an anxiety attack upon learning big brother Tim had joined the fold. When last spotted together in Split Enz, the siblings were prone to excessive cleverness, something Neil outgrew on his own in the less fussy Crowded House. Well, uncross those fingers. Apart from minor lapses, *Woodface* has the big melodies and bold performances you want, with plenty of groovy twisted emotions beneath the lush surfaces.

Above all, the lads put on a fine variety show. Drenched in tangy vocal harmonies, "It's Only Natural" is a toe-tapping treat. Ethereal to the point of spookiness, "All I Ask" captures the shimmering retro vibe of Julie London or Chet Baker. But don't call them nice boys. After apparently closing with the gorgeous "How Will You Go?" they rip into an unkempt rocker, gleefully mimicking Johnny Rotten. The moral? Simply this: In the right hands, pop music remains an exciting option, even if it's as cutting-edge as a horse and buggy. *(available mid-July)*

Jon Young

NORTHSIDE

Chicken Rhythm

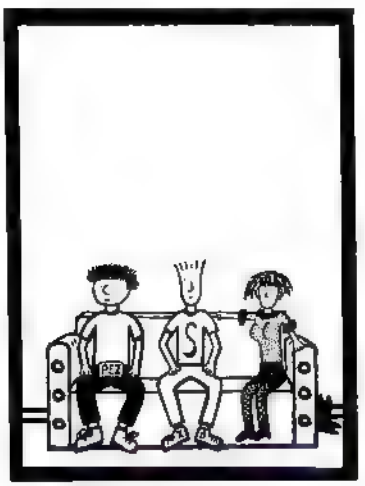
Geffen

Shot during rehearsal for a "Madchester" documentary, Northside rose to fame on one simple syllable. In one nascent chorus, waiflike singer Warren "Dermo" Dermody belted out the unmistakable line, "You're my rising *staaaa* . . ."—a nation was charmed and a *staaaa* was born.

Despite the geography, Northside takes no cue from the "nervous beats" (the band's term) of house music, or from the retro-trance noodlings of their baggy peers. Sure, these guys are party animals, but it's the post-rave roll-up that really lights their fire, to an Adult Contemporary soundtrack of Mac and Genesis. Thus schooled, this '90s garage band cut its fluid funk—look ma, no samples!—with spacious, melodic guitars and expansive melodies.

Little Sutty's Quest for Music *by Mark Blackwell*

SO THE WAY I SEE IT, WE HAVE A CHOICE. WE CAN EITHER: A. LIVE OUR LIVES PASSIONATELY, MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT FEAR, SEIZE THE MOMENT, GRASP OPPORTUNITY, FOLLOW OUR HEARTS, CONSIDER TIME A FLEETING TREASURE, BREATHE THE AIR, LOVE, AND BE ALIVE, OR B. LIVE PASSIONLESS, STAGNANT, UNFULFILLED, CHEAP, PATHETIC, TRIVIAL, USELESS, PASSIVE, DEMORALIZING, PARODIES OF NOTHINGNESS.



The Fall's ever-reasonable Mark E. Smith damned the current generation of Manchester bands as businessmen who like to dress up like Echo and the Bunnymen. Happens he was right, but on both counts Northside is innocent as hell. *(available late July)*

Steven Daly

KRAFTWERK

The Mix

Elektra

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

Strategies Against Architecture II

Mute

In 1975, Lester Bangs predicted that music was about to be taken over by the Germans and the machines and, God, did he ever hit *that* stylus on the head. Directly, the Germans gave us everybody from Neu to Belfegore to Milli Vanilli. Indirectly, they're responsible for PiL's *Metal Box*, Sonic Youth, new age (including the snooze Simon Reynolds calls "oceanic"), Mantronix, the Pet Shop Boys, "I Feel Love," "Planet Rock," Voivod, Def Lep's *Hysteria*, house, industrial, and "Hitler Rap" by Mel Brooks. The whole ball game

No accident—the true *Ubermenschen* of *Fahrvergnügen*-rock have always shown certain vinyl-solutionary tendencies, and they might even be an evolutionary ladder step or two up from the rest of us. So Kraftwerk's new batch of old-hit remixes and Einsturzende Neubauten's new batch of five and unreleased toolbox-bonks feel like great big I Told You So's, as far from Oktoberfest nostalgia as can be. By accenting hooks over etherea, by programming funk-math and doo-wopping Terminators and Pacific Rim gibberish and atonal crescendos and locomotive breath into cybernetricks that were pretty irresistible to begin with, Ralf and Florian have finally outdone themselves and everybody else, too.

And as for their prodigal sons Neubauten, they bless us *mit* rattles, mumbles, squeegees, footsteps, a Lee Hazlewood remake, a Mark E. Smith imitation, and a Jordache ad (!)—all told, a charming post-*Caligari* soundtrack sure to become a definitive text for several beatnik generations. Their art pulls down my pants and taunts me—*welcommen* to the New World Order. *(both available mid-July)*

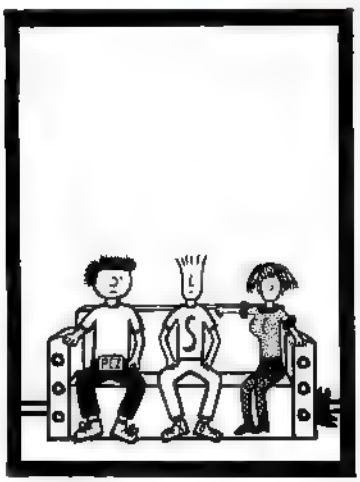
Chuck Eddy

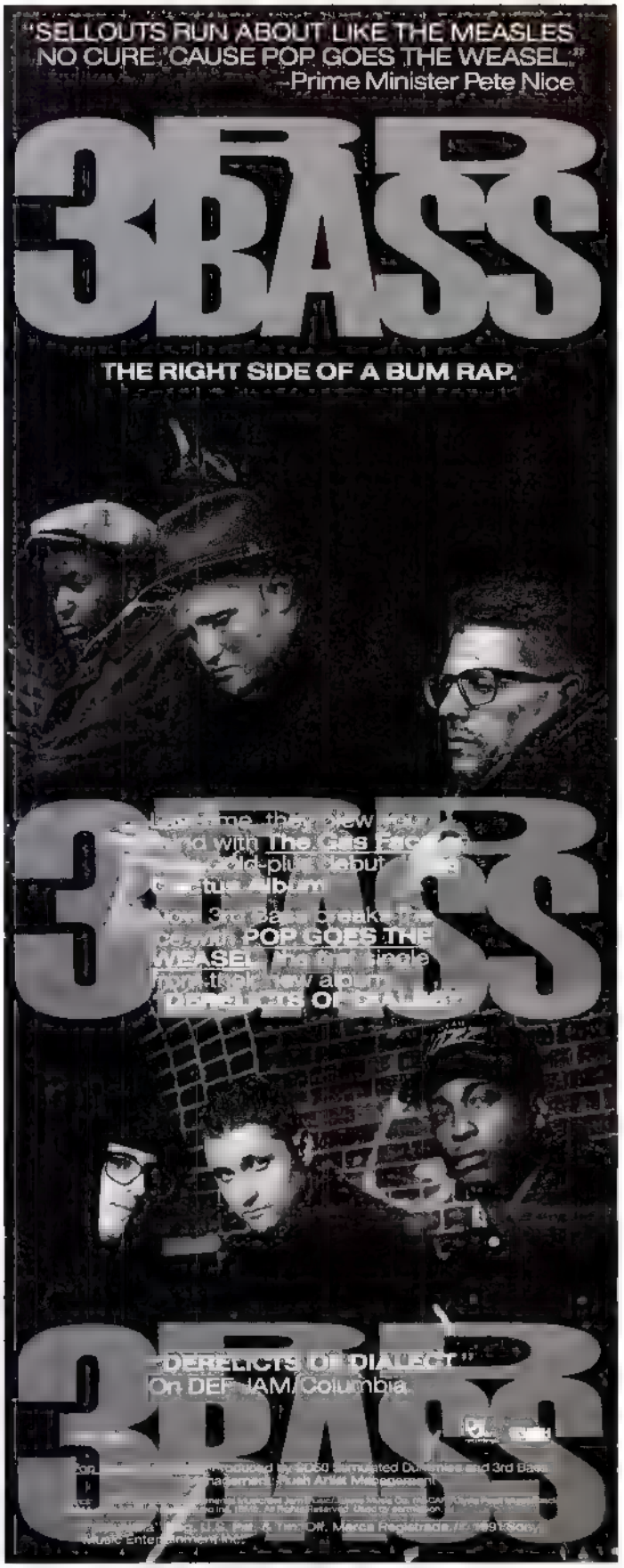
RIC OCASEK

Fireball Zone

Reprise/Warner Bros.

Maybe it's the sunglasses. Or the disease that afflicts all rockers who marry models. But Ric Ocasek





WORLD BEAT

Tabou Combo

BY RICHARD GEHR

HAITIAN DICTATOR JEAN-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier was overthrown in 1986, but it was only last year that the country got around to holding its first free elections since . . . who remembers? According to Gage Averill's on-site report in *The Beat* (in which his excellent "Haitian Fascination" column appears), feelings of danger and exultation mingled with the omnipresent beat of politically juiced *rara* carnival music last December 16, when liberation theologist (and songwriter) Jean-Bertrand Aristide claimed a clear and unexpected victory over a wide field of candidates for President. For once, the good guy won.

Or so it appeared. After surviving a January 6 coup attempt, Aristide remains pressured on one side by the bourgeoisie, which he needs for economic stimulation but whom he's threatening to tax for the first time, and on the other side by the popular coalition whose heightened expectations he's doomed to disappoint. Meanwhile, Haiti's economy remains in worse shape than ever.

Which brings us to Tabou Combo, Haiti's best-known band of émigrés. In light of recent events there, it seems appropriate to check up on these Brooklyn-based kings of *compas*, who've recently released *Zap-Zap*, their 21st album (available through the group's Zafem label, P.O. Box 94, Teaneck, NJ 07666). Four members remain from the group's original lineup 24 years ago, when they were known modestly as Los Incognitos de Pétionville.

Punchier than TC's last studio effort (*Aux Antilles*), *Zap-Zap* relies less on American funkisms than usual and bubbles along like champagne. The *compas* formula remains intact: interlocking Congolese-style silvery guitar lines (Elysée Pyronneau *rules*), popping bass, Earth, Wind and Fire horns, four-on-the-floor drums, clicking cymbals, and sweet Antillean keyboards offer an elegant, somewhat restrained pan-Caribbean dance ambience.

Before a recent show at S.O.B.'s in Manhattan—a regular venue for the group, which performs about 150 times each year—I asked vocalist Jean-Yves "Fanfan Ti-Bòt" Joseph if current Haitian events had any effect on the Tabou's material.

"We don't mingle with politics," Fanfan explained. "We're above politics. If the politicians could have done what we have done over the past 23 years, Haiti would be a better country."

He doesn't give Tabou enough credit. *Zap-Zap*'s title track defends Haitians against charges of being AIDS carriers; "Yo" deals with the plight of Haitian boat people and, according to Fanfan, is the group's most politically direct song ever; and "Lan 2000" offers up a few provisional Haitian heroes, including Marjorie Vincent, Miss America '91.

What Fanfan really has in mind is the band's self-sustaining consistency, its resilience. As the refrain to "Zap-Zap" goes, "*Lapli tonbe nou pa mouye.*" ("It rains but we don't get wet.") Tabou Combo has helped Haitians dance through times of terrible stress and misfortune.

Tabou Combo is Haiti's best-known band of émigrés.

STEVE WINTER

If money can't buy happiness, why do all dates begin at the cash machine?

hasn't done much lately—which is a shame, if only because few things are as clean, lean, and mean as those first coupla Cars LPs.

Of course I'm a sucker for Gnu Wave, but his latest solo effort, "Fireball Zone," ain't half bad—just about a quarter bad (the faux-reggae number "All We Need Is Love" comes immediately to mind).

Then again, the Nile Rodgers coproduction credit seeps through on "Flowers of Evil." While the title track, "Keep That Dream," and "Balance" are refreshingly metallic, and "Rockaway" is the "instant replay" of a power pop heyday Ocasek pines for in "Come Back."

If "Mr. Meaner" sounds like souped-up Flock of Seagulls and "Touchdown Easy" drags a bit, remember that you would too if Paulina were your aerobics instructor. *(available mid-July)*

Bob Mack

SKID ROW
Slave to the Grind
Atlantic

Skid Row hit the rock-star circuit as Bon Jovi's bad boys, and the formula for long-term multiplatinum success seemed written out for 'em: radio-friendly pop metal anthems plus rebel-without-a-clue posturings (courtesy of front man Sebastian Bach's often unfortunate mouth) equal the big bucks.

Surprise. Mighta known something weird was happening when Bach showed up on Sean Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance" video. Skid Row's second disc has integrity, passion, and the sort of manic, crackling energy that's been largely excised from MTV metal (blame Desmond Child). *Slave to the Grind* is reminiscent of the punchier, infinitely more interesting era of early Motley Crue and Judas Priest.

The title track rages with evil power chords and machine-gun percussion. "Riot Act" sports a Sex Pistols snarl. There is no clear hit single. The most likely candidate, "In a Darkened Room," is a downer. "Wasted Time" is almost six minutes long, as is "Quicksand Jesus" (which won't fly in the Bible Belt in any case).

Trashing hotel rooms and throwing beer bottles are just clichés. But by releasing this album, the guys in Skid Row prove they really *are* rebels. *(available late June)*

Daina Darzin

NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN
God Fodder
Columbia

If this were the first band I'd heard in today's flavor, I might be impressed. It's not, I'm not. A cushion of distorted guitar, some hyperrhythmic drumming ("Selfish"), washes of psychedelia—fine stuff, but meatloaf again? This band's recipe has too much onion, not enough spice—the Dustbin's vocals are too far out front, resulting in a planar sound with the band on one level and the singing on another. It's flat, twice. (Which makes them kind of unique for a couple songs.)

Ned's vocalist has a strong pop voice, one that could make a mark given more original material. Lyrically, *God Fodder* seems to be more songs about alienation and food. And food gets short shrift. But they've got a sense of humor about it, urging you to "Kill Your Television," start "Throwing Things," and "read her thoughts in capital letters" (from "You"). Sounds to me like Ned's Atomic Dustbin got swept up in a clone-today's-sound craze. It's solid stuff, but it's starting to congeal. *(available mid-July)*

Robert Gordon

WORLD PARTY
Thank You World
Chrysalis/Enigma

By choosing John Lennon's "Happiness Is a Warm Gun" as the centerpiece of this extra-long EP, World Party host Karl Wallinger seems to be praising the Beatles more for their studio adroitness than for their song craft. Too bad his hunch in this case isn't half as entertaining as he thinks it is, even if it happens to be right. Pop records are *made* not *played* by matter of course. It's far more difficult, though, to abide

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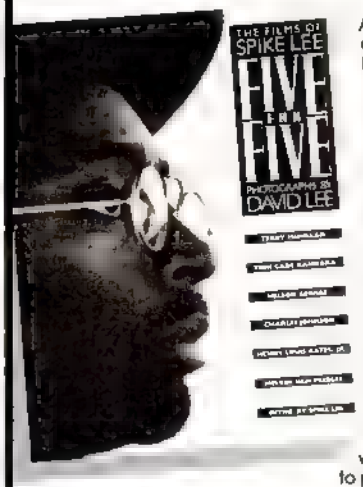

Along with remarkable on- and off-the-set photographs by David Lee (Spike's brother and unit photographer), a foreword by Melvin Van Peebles, and an introduction by Spike himself, *Five for Five* offers frank and provocative views of Spike's work by well known African-American writers Terry McMillan, Toni Cade Bambara, Nelson George, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and National Book Award winner Charles Johnson in a beautifully produced volume.

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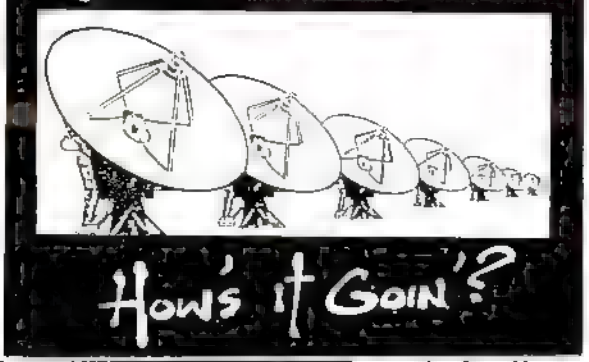

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Bessie Smith

BY LARRY BIRNBAUM

THE BLUES IS A WOMAN, IT'S BEEN said, and for the first decade of its recorded history the blues was dominated by women who sang with jazz bands or solo piano accompaniment. Critics later dismissed their "classic blues" as an overrefined Yankee commercialization of the raw, cotton-bottom blues sung by men with guitars in rural Mississippi. But Jelly Roll Morton and Ma Rainey both said they heard women singing the blues as early as 1902. In New Orleans and St. Louis, respectively—while Delta guitarists Sam Chatmon, Fred McDowell, and Henry Townsend denied hearing any blues in the early years of the century. Maybe women really did it first.

Surely Bessie Smith did it best. Her brawny contralto was as gutbucket as pig foot and a bottle of beer. No other singer ever dive-bombed a blue note with such devastating force and accuracy. Janis Joplin helped pay for Bessie's headstone in 1970, 33 years after the Empress of the Blues was buried in an unmarked grave. But though Janis claimed Bessie as a prime influence, she never could ape Bessie's growl. Where Janis was scattered and unpredictable, Bessie kept a steely grip on the most torturous moans and tortuous bends.

Her temper, however, was uncontrolled. Carl Van Vechten, the wealthy white radical-chic music critic and author of the novel *Nigger Heaven* got his fill when he invited Bessie to an exclusive soiree at his plush Manhattan digs. According to Bessie biographer Chris Albertson, Van Vechten recommended a "lovely, lovely dry martini," to which she

by Wallinger single-handedly re-creating "Happiness" not only note for note but at the exact same tempo as the original.

Wallinger's multitracked monomania is better served by the three permutations (album version, remix, and live) of "Thank You World," from last year's *Goodbye Jumbo*. Even more notable, "S.E.X.," one of four new songs, sounds like Prince nodding out. And to his credit, Wallinger one-ups Lenny Kravitz in the '60s sing-along sweepstakes if only because no matter how hard they both try to emulate Lennon, Wallinger always ends up sounding more like Mick Jagger: "You're Invited to a Party" is a lump of bohemian nastiness that one suspects the flower-powered Kravitz would be unable to stomach. Recommended for true fans and other collectors of vintage pop tarts. *(available mid-July)*

Alec Foege

BONNIE RAITT

Luck of the Draw

Capitol

There was a time when one paid Bonnie Raitt respect. A critic's darling from her very first album, a victim of drink and the record-industry shuffle, the consummate journeywoman—tales of could have and might have beset each subsequent release. Then slicky-boy producer Don Was souped up her classy chassis and made her No. 1 with 1989's Grammy-winning *Nick of Time*. Now people call her old hat.

No doubt Raitt's an interpreter—her choice of material conveys more a state of mind than a point of view. Even her carefully wrought originals—"Come to Me" is the standout here—have a found-art quality to them. But give her a standard-issue John Hiatt tune ("No Business") and she'll get it slung down low and start it humming; "Good Man, Good Woman," a mid-paced duet with Delbert McClinton penned by Womack and Womack, keeps Ivan Neville pumping a Hammond B3 proper. And having winnowed the wistful-ballad count to two proves a lesson learned: Raitt's russet rasp has no real place on Adult Contemporary playlists.

I like the notion of a strong slide guitarist who just happens to be a woman. Slide guitar's edgy flow grants instant empowerment outside its traditional male provenance. Bettering *Nick*'s three, five out of twelve

responded, "Ain't you got some whiskey, man?" As the ermined blues queen stormed out, his wife tried to kiss her goodbye. "Get the fuck away from me," hollered Bessie. "I ain't never heard of such shit." In fact, Bessie, like Janis, was aggressively bisexual.

Columbia's new *The Complete Recordings: Vol. 1*, presents the first 38 of her 160 known tracks chronologically on two CDs, kicking off with "Down Hearted Blues" from February 1923. The song had been a hit the previous year for Alberta Hunter with Eubie Blake's orchestra, but Bessie, backed by Clarence Williams's plodding piano, made Alberta sound pale and amazingly sold nearly 800,000 copies.

Although Bessie waxed profusely over the next 14 months, mostly with just a pianist, these were her worst-recorded and—with exceptions such as "Cemetery Blues," "Outside of That," and " 'Tain't Nobody's Bizness If I Do"—weakest sides. But even in bad voice she could blow her rivals away, as she does with Clara Smith on their duet "I'm Going Back to My Used to Be." Her greatest sessions, featuring the likes of Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, and James P. Johnson, were yet to come. Still, when she bawls, "Some people say that the worried blues ain't bad/But it's the worst old feeling that I've ever had," on "Mama's Got the Blues," the painful truth behind the old cliché rings out with a timeless spirit not even Robert Johnson could surpass.

Bessie's brawny contralto was as gutbucket as pig foot and a bottle of beer.

cuts on *Luck* feature Raitt's swooping bottleneck. Bonnie Raitt may no longer seem the tough gal she used to be, but scrape off that VH-1 sheen and the mettle shows right through. *(available mid-July)*

Alec Foege

SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES

Superstition
Geffen

They exhort us to overcome fear of the unknown, but Siouxsie and the Banshees don't exactly break new ground themselves on *Superstition*. Coasting on familiar ominous currents of sound, good ol' Sioux plays a zombie oracle, relaying her cosmic pronouncements with a calm punctuated only by the stray freakish yodel. While she may be more a presence than a singer, and while the band adds the same droning ambience to rockers ("Silly Thing") and ballads ("Softly") alike, it's a damn entertaining spook show—if you're a connoisseur of hokum.

What? They want to be taken seriously? Too bad Sioux and crew have let their stylized cool dominate the grooves, 'cause there's a heap of intelligent craftsmanship going on behind the facade. However predictable, "Drifter" offers a case study in creating atmosphere, slowly building a forbidding mood until you're enveloped in total darkness. The morose "Cry" proves they're really hopeless cornballs, like normal people; in the wake of this heartrending performance, Sioux might consider an album of Patsy Cline covers. On the other hand, the eloquent "Got to Get Up" offers a pointed rebuttal to the moping, with Ms. S insisting, "You've got to reach out—grab your destiny / Kick up the dust—kick up a storm." Unfortunately, that startling message gets lost amid the stupor-inducing grandeur of *Superstition*. *(available late June)*

Jon Young

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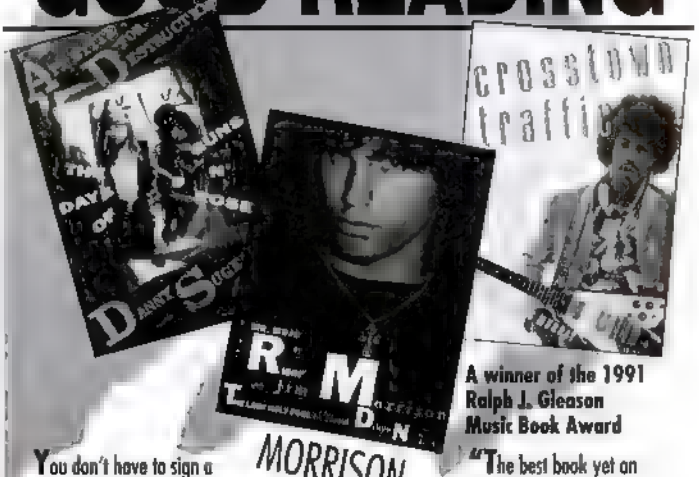

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UNDER GROUND

Richard Thompson is one of the most innovative guitarists in rock, and he's also one of the genre's premier songwriters. So why have you never heard of him? JIM GREER looks into it.

Richard Thompson: the reluctant God of the guitar world.

THE FACT THAT RICHARD Thompson, after all these years, can still in some sense be considered an "underground" figure is a sad comment on the state of the music industry. Since his days in the late '60s with seminal trad-folk rockers Fairport Convention—when Thompson was in the band it was quite possibly the best "rock" group in the world—through his recent solo stuff, the man has churned out a body of music on a par with . . . well, with anyone who's anybody. He's earned a large chunk of his reputation through his brilliant, innovative guitar-playing, but his guitar stylings are really just an extension of his consistently amazing songwriting. His songs are mostly based in some sort of Anglo-Celtic folk tradition, but more often than not they cross generic boundaries with reckless disregard for what's supposed to "work." And he makes them work.

But it's probably that very willingness to take chances that's prevented Thompson from garnering the mainstream acceptance he deserves (and professes to not want). He's perceived by as many as an eccentric British folkie, which, while it's a tag he probably wouldn't quibble with (having an eccentric British folkie's sense of humor), is an unfair characterization. At a typical Richard Thompson concert—including a solo acoustic set I saw not long ago at Maxwell's in Hoboken, New Jersey—the audience is equal parts aging hippies, aging punks, and bright-eyed college kids, each group there for its own similar-but-unrelated reasons. Thompson draws one of the most diverse audiences I've seen at a rock-type show in ages (almost as diverse as the crowd at the Wayne Newton show I saw in Vegas a few weeks back), which is a testimony both to his longevity and to the breadth of his achievements.

As a guitarist, the man has few peers. SPIN colleague Larry Birnbaum wrote recently that "If Clapton is God, then Robert Johnson is God's god," but Richard Thompson sits in the pantheon with both of them, and it's hard to say whether at the end of the day he won't be sitting just a little higher than both. Fortunately, that kind of veneration makes him distinctly uncomfortable.

"I don't like that whole guitar-god thing," Thompson said when we spoke recently. "For the same reason I don't generally like guitar magazines—they tend to be incestuous. They tend to breed guitar players who sound the same. It's not always a good thing to know how somebody does something.

"Like B.B. King—he listened to Robert Johnson as a kid and said, 'How does he get that sound?' So he started bending the strings, because he thought that's what Johnson was doing. And that's how that started."

Despite his reluctance to assume any sort of mantle, Thompson's guitar-playing and songwriting have proven extremely influential for a number of pre- and post-punk guitar plunkers—everyone from R.E.M. to Pere Ubu claims him as an avatar. On a recent tour ex-Hüsker Dü screamer turned boho-bard Bob Mould covered "Shoot Out the Lights" from the 1982 album of the same name, which Thompson recorded with his erstwhile wife, Linda. That record is considered by many critics his best—it made the Top Ten in *Rolling Stone*'s list of the best hundred records of the decade—but it's clear from a listen to any of his recent solo outings, including the forthcoming *Rumor and Sigh*, that he's as capable of brilliance as ever.

"My records are not part of the American musical mainstream—as defined by who knows what," maintains Thompson. "If I'm aiming at any particular audience, it's really a very small one in Britain—a certain kind of British person.

"I think that for the general public, my records sound strange. But ultimately, it's the song that's important, which is why I find listening to the radio such a depressing experience most of the time. Everything has that radio sheen to it, but what's actually going on inside the song isn't interesting—it's either clichéd or it's mundane. It's been done a thousand times before." ❁

LAURA LEVINE

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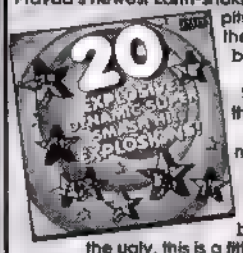

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Indianapolis

continued from page 36

swanhood kicks in, i.e., adulthood, experience, maybe even societal acceptance, the flame dies down. How do you slam-dance once you've realized that Life is nobody's fault?

The taxi never came so I started walking in a random direction, past hot dog stands and blinking neon, my mind reeling. I couldn't stop thinking about when I was about 15 or 16 and how absurd I would have thought it if I knew I would be stumbling around an interstate in Middle America ten years later looking for the soul of rock'n'roll. There was no question about it then, it was everywhere.

It was in the bathroom when my boyfriend and I spent a whole day dying our hair matching shock-orange while my mother pounded on the door screaming, "Why do you have to destroy yourselves?" Boy did she hate him. She'd yell, "Why is it I work in a mental hospital and he looks more insane than anybody there?" I told her he was really smart and that he had *built* his own guitar and that he was in this great punk band and all the girls wanted him—but she remained unimpressed. She banned him finally from entering our apartment. My sister, meanwhile, was dating a guy with waist-length hair who turned her on to the Residents, never wore shoes, and threw firecrackers at her in the bathtub.

We were in the middle of nowhere (a small city in Sweden) and the more you're in the middle of nowhere the more important it becomes to make the cat jump. It was around 1980 and punk was phasing into postpunk and we were so desperate for rock'n' roll we'd hitchhike to *Denmark* to see a show if we had to. Now I'll barely walk ten blocks—and I get free tickets.

I kept walking and the memories kept coming. The soul of rock'n' roll? We took over an old shoe factory and made a club and rehearsal rooms out of it and started banging on instruments and if there weren't any instruments we used garbage cans and vacuum cleaners and whatever we could find and bands came through from all over Europe and we made them cheese sandwiches and lugged their equipment and then danced like as if to drive off the plague—in fact we *were* driving off the plague—the plague of apathy, and inertia, and society, and social democracy, and all the conventions and enforced Marxist morality and laws, laws, laws, more laws than anywhere else in the world. The point was to put a dent in Utopia—to make the cat jump—and to kick the suits (who in this case wore round glasses) right in the teeth.

So we burned a Swedish flag on the roof, blew up a shack where the police stored weapons, covered our walls with antigovernment graffiti, and most importantly—played rock'n'roll. Day and night, night and day. Until finally one day government officials came in and shut the whole place down—they had planted agents in there and had evidence that we were "subversive" and were growing marijuana in the attic. (We weren't actually—they were tomato plants—we had a vegetarian restaurant.) One guy just stood and banged his head against the wall when they came in and told us. We were proud though, to be such a threat, to have this power through clothes and hair dye and graffiti—through rock'n'roll.

They said we could stay if we wanted to but the place would be run by the state—the "commune"—from now on. Uniformed guards would frisk people for alcohol at the door. (We had no liquor license—only the state can sell liquor in Sweden.) They painted over our graffiti. *Gray* paint. They changed the name of the club from the House of Rock to the House of *Culture*—I kid you not. The bass player in one of our two house punk bands asked me and a friend to help him cut his hair—one last time—in the bathroom. Then he went straight home and hanged himself, like the Jan Palach of our own little Prague Spring. After that, it was over. What was our club is now a parking lot for police cars.

Now, I'm not saying we weren't morons because we most certainly were—pure scum. But I believe we were morons with soul as opposed to morons who watch too much MTV and copy what they see like monkeys, all because they want

How can you slam-dance once you've realized that Life is nobody's fault?

to be rock stars. I know I'm on thin ice here, and you're bound to slag me off and say, "What's with the Euro-tude, honey?"—but hear me out. The reason I told you that whole story is that I believe the soul of rock'n'roll has been lost to that exclusively American phenomenon—overkill. We are a bulimic nation—we gorge and puke on everything from talk shows to fitness to rock'n' roll. Rock'n'roll generates more money each year than General Electric. MTV never stops running videos—*ever*. Think about that. Isn't there something vaguely Orwellian there? This may be a dated, romantic notion, but I think the soul of rock'n'roll was cooked as soon as its full commercial potential was realized. When something's being rammed down your throat it's very hard to want it anymore, and I think the soul of rock'n' roll hinges somewhat on the desire for it—the *need* for it, and the tension that fills the space where the need is left unsatisfied.

I went back to that old Swedish shoe factory just before they demolished it last year. It was deserted save for an old hippie I vaguely remembered who was in the garage doing pottery. The doors were locked and I stood with my forehead pressed against the glass looking in at the dusty vacant floor and my heart started pounding wildly, just to see that room. Energy doesn't die, the ghost of rock'n'roll was in there, grinning.

Despite all the amputation, you can still just dance to a rock'n'roll station, and it'll be alright. The soul of rock'n'roll is free, stupid as that may sound, and it can't die because it's energy. Somewhere—in somebody's basement, in some rehearsal room, at some show, maybe even in this city—the cat is jumping. The soul of rock'n'roll is hiding.

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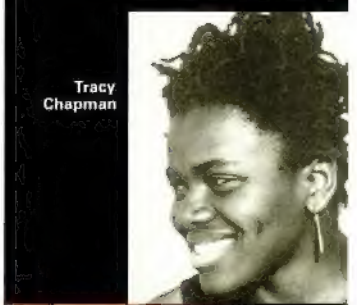
BACK PAGE

Tanita Tikaram

The second coming is a tricky act to pull off—as proved by the followup albums of some sophomore stars. JONATHAN BERNSTEIN explains.


Tracy Chapman

Edie Brickell

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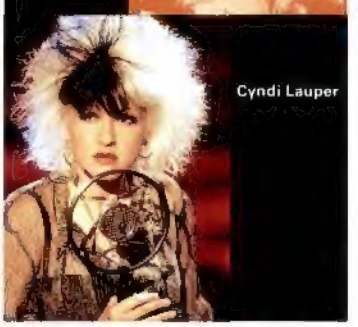
Cyndi Lauper

THE SELF-HELP SECTIONS OF every Doubleday and B. Dalton are crammed with books about women who love too much and the men who hate them. It's surprising that, to date, no trickster has cashed in with a manual professing to clear the crossed lines of communication in that most difficult of modern relationships: the romance between audience and artist.

Eternal suckers, we continually fall for a fusion of smooth skin, smirk, and snare sample only to realize we've inadvertently shouldered the responsibility of supporting some sap's dreams of an actual long-term career. Even after all this time, these much-celebrated 35 years of rock, there's no unspoken pact between performer and public, nothing to stop a onetime-lucky, swollen-headed simp from saying, in effect, "Come with me, grow with me, and together we will explore strange and wonderful lands." There's no consumer version of an insincere "I'll call you."

The industry term for customer drift occurring between first and second albums is "sophomore jinx." Edie Brickell not only succinctly summed up the tone of the times with her shrug-in-song, "(What I Am Is) What I Am," but also displayed commendable prescience titling her little-heard second album, *Ghost of a Dog*. These dang phantom pooches, allied with innate conservatism and wary recollections of wasted paychecks, are contributing to ever-more-frequent occurrences of major-artists-in-the-making stalling at the starting gate. Millions climbed willingly into Tracy Chapman's fast car—few saw out the journey all the way to the *Crossroads*. Chapman's U.K. equivalent, husky, dusky Tanita Tikaram, claimed column inches almost as voluminous as her sales figure with her debut, *Ancient Heart*, and its enigmatic, indecipherable imagery. When she returned with more of the same on *The Sweet Keeper*, her public stopped discussing her music and started listening to it. Ghost of a dog.

Soul II Soul were the pacemaker of our lives at the end of the '80s. They turned British soul from punchline to profit. Their backbeat was the international currency on which CEO Jazzie B planned to build an empire: a Soul II Soul airline, a hospital, a bank. His aspirations have been temporarily halted in an effort to find premises large enough to house unsold copies of Soul II Soul's second album, the accurately titled *1990: A New Decade*.

Some acts define themselves so comprehensively that they've exhausted your need for them by the time the final track has faded. For these people, there is no encore. How could Cyndi Lauper's career have progressed: *She's Even More Unusual*? Were the crowds who stayed away from Big Country's subsequent swirly-bagpipe guitar epics missing a band who had achieved greatness? Was the Beastie Boys' second album a quantum leap in every respect from its predecessor? Yes, but the trio's name had a small smell attached to it. George Michael gets respect as King of the Flim-Flam Men, shepherding his entire flock from adolescence into adulthood, all the while convincing them that he alone was the necessary accessory to their life-styles. In his high-turnover homeland, many try to emulate him but few succeed. From doomed teen-aimed duos like Bros, Manchester scamps like the Inspiral Carpets, class acts like Alison Moyet, to nonentities like Roachford and Black or struggling savants like Morrissey, the successful second album has proved, in every case, unattainable.

Meanwhile, late at night in a studio on the other side of town, a studio Tone-Lōc has recently vacated (and in which U.K. popsters Texas will soon attempt to inject some commercial sparkle into their long-protracted second album), Neneh Cherry steps up to the mike, slips on her headphones, waits for the track, and, in that split second of silence, she hears . . . was that barking?

Tama Janowitz will be back next month.

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